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ABSTRACT

Today's schools are entering a second wave of reform in response to changing demographics, public demand for accountability, and societal changes expanding the traditional time frame for learning. To meet these challenges, schools need help through home and community involvement. This book offers seven strategies illustrated by success stories from real school districts. Part I provides case studies of effective home, school, and community involvement. Chapter 1 discusses school use of community resources. Partnerships with businesses and community agencies are supplementing traditional volunteer efforts, as mothers become less available. Chapter 2 discusses school resources and facilities provided to the community for lifelong learning programs ranging from early childhood education to intergenerational activities. Part II explains how to set up effective programs. Chapter 3 advises schools to start at the top by identifying needs, publicizing them, and asking community leaders for help. Chapter 4 discusses ways to involve these leaders in the educational process. Decision-making should not be limited to parents of children in the school system. Support must also come from nonparents--the group comprising the majority of citizens. Chapter 5 advises educators to broadcast their success by using local media outlets, sending Christmas card greetings, publicly honoring volunteers, and becoming part of a comprehensive community calendar. A list of school districts interviewed, a general bibliography of 56 references, and some educational partnership references are also provided. (MLH)

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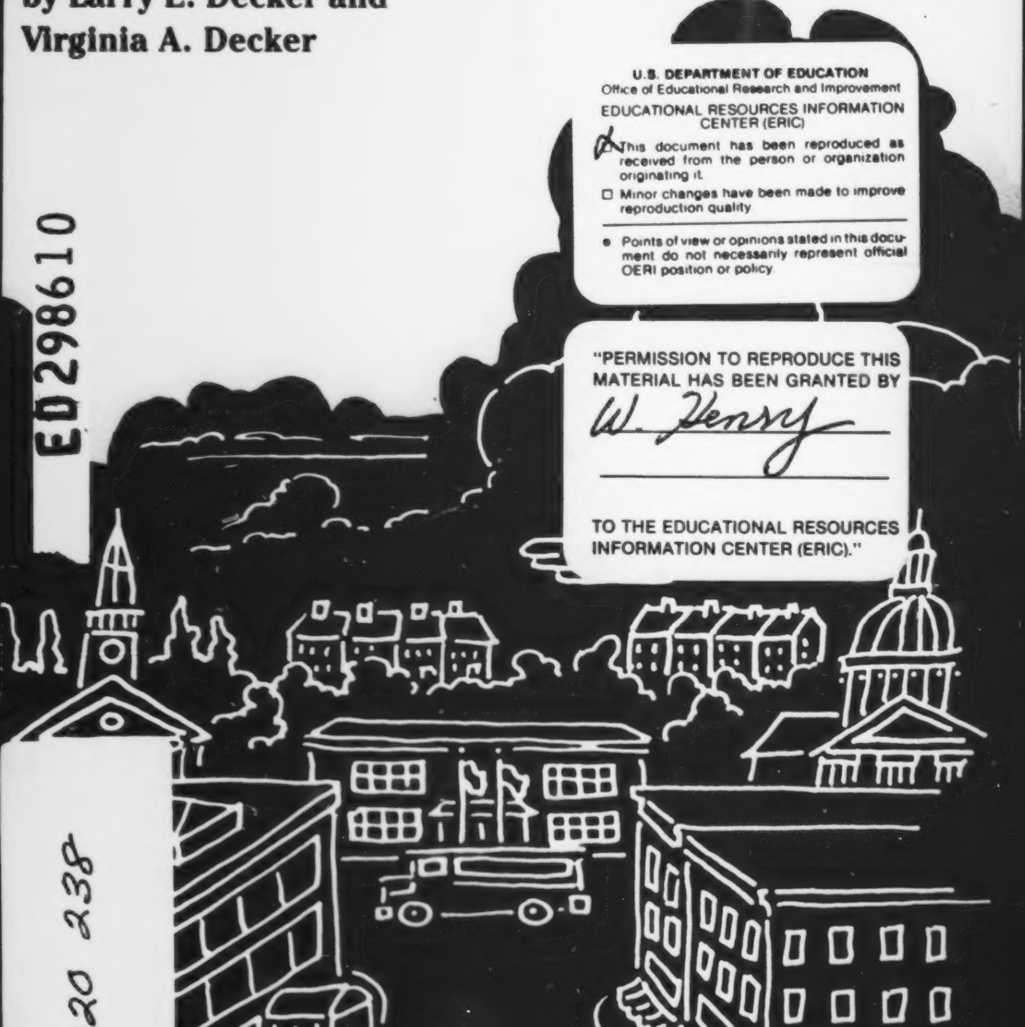
HOME/SCHOOL/COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT

by Larry E. Decker and
Virginia A. Decker



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INVOLVEMENT

by Larry E. Decker and
Virginia A. Decker

with
Debbie Demmon-Berger,
Angela Martin, and
T. Susan Hill

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Seven strategies set the framework for addressing the second wave of educational reform. The five chapters to follow show how these strategies can be implemented. i

Part I: Case studies of effective home/school/community involvement

Chapter 1

Partnerships: how schools use community resources

The traditional school volunteer – the at-home mother – is no longer as available as in the past, so schools have learned to use community resources in a variety of ways. Volunteers are still the cornerstone but, increasingly, schools are turning to partnerships with businesses and community agencies. 3

Chapter 2

School centers: how communities use school resources

Schools also provide resources to the community. Everyone benefits when valuable school facilities are fully used and made available to all. Lifelong learning is the goal for programs that range from early childhood education to intergenerational activities. 27

Part II: How to set up effective programs

Chapter 3

Start at the top

Starting out involves identifying needs and making them known. Most people are just waiting to be asked. 47

Chapter 4
Involve everyone

There are many different ways to involve community members in the educational process. Decision making should not be limited to parents of children in the school system. The more people who are involved in the process, the greater the system's support will be, particularly important since the majority of citizens in most communities are non-parents. 63

Chapter 5
Broadcast your results

Getting the word out is essential to the success of education in the community. Strong lines of communication to the community help your programs avoid mistakes and misunderstandings. 91

Appendix

Sample job description for director of community education .. 107

Sample school board resolution in support of community education 109

Needs assessment questions 111

Sample policy statements regarding advisory committees to the board of education, system-level advisory committees, building-level advisory committees, school volunteers, and public relations 116

Resource school districts 122

General bibliography 125

Educational partnership references 130

Acknowledgments 132

Introduction

> *. . . educational reform should focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society. At the heart of such a society is the commitment to a set of values and to a system of education that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to full capacity, from early childhood through adulthood, learning more as the world changes.*
>
> . . . A Nation At Risk

Today, public schools are entering a second wave of reform. The return to bare-bones, stripped-to-the-basics curricula that followed the first wave of reform — brought on by those first critical reports of public schools more than a decade ago — is over. It wasn't enough. Schools still weren't providing the education that communities wanted not only for school-age kids, but also for people of all ages. Still to be addressed are changing demographics, the public's demand for accountability, and societal changes that have swept aside the traditional time frame for learning.

Moreover, it is clear that the schools, with their limited resources, cannot do it alone. To meet the challenges of the second wave of reform, schools need help — and how schools can get that help by involving the home and community is what this book is all about. Through a set of seven strategies, illustrated by success stories from real school districts, educators and communities will learn how to integrate school and community resources to meet mutual needs.

Ideally that integration, or involvement if you will, will come together as a total learning environment, with the home, school, and community working together not just for the good of the students, but for the good of the community as a whole. As Shirley Bryant, director of community relations for the Birmingham, Mich., public schools, puts it, "The strength of a community lies in the strength of its connections."

Why a learning society now?

The goal of a learning society is to refocus education's mission, turning its emphasis from a conventional K through 12 educational time frame to lifelong learning; to a society that uses its educational resources, its family resources, and its community resources to educate people of all ages at all stages of their lives. It is not a new idea. Its proponents included Socrates and our own Founding Fathers, who articulated it in the writing of the Northwest Ordinance that was passed by Congress July 13, 1787. More recent recognition of the need for lifelong learning came in 1976 in the passage of the Lifelong Learning Act (PL 94-482) when Congress declared that a mechanism was needed for assessing the learning needs of individuals and society and for determining ways programs and resources might best be used to help meet those needs. Old idea or new, before we simply call up something that has been tried before, we must analyze why it could be useful today.

Demographic changes

A diminishing support base is one answer. Schools in many communities have become relatively isolated from community life, concentrating only on those community members who have children in school. Yet this group represents only about 25 percent of the households in a typical community. With little or no contact with the schools, the remaining 75 percent of households often perceive no direct benefits to themselves from public education and thus are reluctant to support the community's schools, particularly when tax increases or other financial measures are at issue. To regain their support, schools must find ways to involve non-parents in meaningful ways so that their interest is revitalized and their own personal needs are met. Lifelong learning accomplishes that by making school resources available to everyone in the community, not just those who are ages 5 to 17.

"A school system with a good program of community ownership will never lose a bond issue," comments Bryant.

Demographics also incorporate those social issues that come about with such changes as increased employment of women, early retirement and greater longevity of older citizens, and more single-parent homes, which give rise to the need for extended-care programs for children as well as increased leisure time pursuits for the elderly. Turning the senior citizen's leisure time into an educational resource for the schools is, of course, a cornerstone of the learning society.

Katherine E. Keough, in a publication of the National Association of State Boards of Education, *Scenario 2000: Intercepting the Future*, refers to the catchphrase "the graying of America" as she suggests the many educational opportunities that might be made available for retired citizens, the fastest growing segment of our population. She notes that many retirees desiring to enter the job market are going back to the classroom to pick up skills or finish educations they were forced to abandon in their teens. Others simply want to learn new skills, find new challenges, or have social outlets. "Each age group can learn from the other's experiences and outlook, adding a new dimension to the courses for both," Keough says.

Technological changes

There are other reasons why the learning society's time is now. Pluralism and rapid technological change have created a diversity of new educational needs. These changes affect almost every age and socioeconomic group, making educational programming increasingly difficult. In its more than 200-year history, the United States has developed an elaborate system of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education to serve its children and youth. This educational emphasis on youth is based on the premise that life is lived in three phases: education in the early years, work in the middle years, and retirement in the later years. Yet today these phases have become obsolete; they no longer correspond with the way most people live or want to live.

Moreover, the accelerating rate of change in today's world requires people to learn and to adapt to new ideas almost constantly. People of all ages are experiencing a need for learning experiences that span a lifetime. It is impossible to teach school-age children and youth all the skills and information

Changing student populations

Demographic and societal changes pose significant challenges for public education. Among them is a changing student population that in coming years will have:

- More children entering school from poverty households.
- More children entering school from single-parent households.
- More children from minority backgrounds.
- A smaller percentage of children who participated in Head Start and similar programs, even though more are eligible.
- A larger percentage of children who were premature babies, leading to learning difficulties in school.
- More children whose parents were not married, now 12 of every 100 births.
- More latchkey children and children from blended families as a result of remarriage.

they will need during their adult years.

For example, futurist Christopher Dede refers to an "occupational half-life" — the length of time one's knowledge is useful in one's work before obsolescence sets in. What this means in practical terms is that individuals no longer can expect to secure in school the skills and training they will need for lifelong employment. Today, people must re-educate themselves every five years to update their career skills. If schools take on responsibility for some of that re-education, bringing adults back into the classroom throughout their lives, much of the diminished support base mentioned earlier can be regained.

- More children of teenage mothers.
- Fewer white, middle-class, suburban children, with daycare (once the province of the poor) becoming a middle class norm as more women enter the work force.
- A continuing decline in the level of retention to high school graduation in virtually all states.
- A continuing drop in the number of minority high school graduates who apply for college.
- A continuing increase in the number of black middle class students in the entire system.
- Increased numbers of Asian-American students, but with more from Indonesia, with increasing language difficulties.
- Continued high dropout rates among Hispanics (currently about 40 percent complete high school), who are becoming the majority of the school population in many parts of the nation.

. . . Harold Hodgkinson
All One System

Educational equity concerns

Many of the educational studies published in recent years have proposed changes that are geared predominantly to the college-bound student. Yet the majority of students either will not graduate at all or will not seek a baccalaureate degree. As Dale Mann of Columbia University reported to participants at a 1985 National Invitational Working Conference on Holding Power and Dropouts, the reform agenda is insufficiently sensitive to students who have dropped out of school or who may be at risk of doing so.

Current statistics show that one of every four high school freshmen will not graduate; in major cities and among minority groups, half of those who start high school will drop out. As the Business Advisory Commission of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) stresses in its 1985 report, *Reconnecting Youth: The Next State of Reform*, this dropout rate has far-reaching educational and economic implications as these students attempt to forge lives for themselves without the background or skills necessary for success. The numbers of adults with difficulties in the area of consumer education and consumer economics continues to grow, augmented by the increasing number of school dropouts and minorities.

Their needs will have to be met in the learning society, as well as the needs of the majority of students who do not attend college following high school graduation. These are the students who will enter the most rapidly growing job categories, which need individuals who have more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year college degree.

Another programming challenge for American education is how to meet the needs of children from differing backgrounds and experiences. Harold Hodgkinson, a noted expert on educational demographics, underscores this point in *All One System*. He notes that his studies of the demographics of education from kindergarten through graduate school indicate that this challenge will continue and will grow. The implications of these changes are serious, for the success or failure of these individuals may depend on how their needs are addressed by the educational system. As made clear by two studies, the National Coalition of Advocates for Students and the Hispanic Policy Development Project, reported in the *Carnegie Quarterly*:

- A disproportionate number of poor and minority students are grouped in curriculum tracks that thwart their aspirations and reinforce their sense of failure.

- Standardized testing diminishes the expectations of linguistic, cultural, and racial minorities.

- Schools discriminate by mislabeling minority students and "warehousing" them in special education classes.

- Schools, often as a result of standardized testing, devalue the variety of strengths students bring to school and, in the process, cause their differences to become handicaps.

Responding to the challenge

Most people agree that the curriculum in American public schools should respond to the needs of students to become proficient in the English language, to achieve in subject areas for successful completion of graduation requirements, and to develop and maintain a positive self-concept that encourages academic achievement. However, debate continues on the most effective ways to meet the broad spectrum of specialized educational needs, ranging from those of minorities and at-risk youth to those of the gifted and talented, those of the mentally and physically handicapped, and those of the very young and the very old. Designing a curriculum that resolves the educational and social issues that arise from equal access/academic standards reform efforts is complicated by limitations on resources and qualified personnel. Since schools alone cannot meet these educational needs, what seems to be called for is a cooperative venture where home, school, and community work together. Increasingly, the framework for such a cooperative venture is community education.

When community education is used to guide home/ school/ community involvement efforts, the schools are operated with a commitment to the idea that they belong to the community. Professional community educators are trained in enlisting community involvement and often provide inservice for administrators and teachers to increase their community involvement skills. Community school programs, based on a variety of involvement relationships and activities among schools, parents, students, businesses and industry, local organizations, and community members, are the catalyst that can turn traditional schools into lifelong learning centers.

And it works. When describing the exemplary community education programs that have been established in the communities featured in the chapters to come, some educational leaders mentioned early apprehensions. But all were astonished with the degree of community enthusiasm and support the programs engendered. "Getting people involved in the schools helps them to see the schools' problems as their own," comments Harry Allen, former assistant superintendent of the Brockton, Mass., schools.

The learning community is a way of looking at public education as a total community enterprise. It provides a framework for local citizens and a community's schools, agencies, and institutions to become active partners in addressing many of the problems and quality-of-life concerns prevalent in the community today. Sometimes this takes the form of a school using the community's resources in some way — from parent volunteers, perhaps, to an "adoption" by a local business or industry. Sometimes, instead, it is the community that uses the school's resources. Senior citizens may eat in the school cafeteria, a nearby business might use the gymnasium before school hours for gymnastic routines, or a local club might borrow the school computer in the evening. The ideal situation is when the sharing of resources is mutual, when those elderly citizens read to children or tutor them for a time following the lunch hour or the gymnasts organize student teams on weekends. However it works, the end result is to get the community involved in the schools and the schools involved with the community for mutual benefits. Therein lies the learning community's strength.

A framework for success

To accomplish this goal, communities and schools need an action plan, a set of strategies to help them develop and nurture cooperative ventures. Schools can use the strategies outlined below, and expanded upon in the chapters to follow, as a practical blueprint for developing community education programs in the true spirit of the learning community:

Strategy I: **Encourage and increase the use of community resources and volunteers to augment the educational curricula in kindergarten through 12th grade.**

Every community has a unique set of human, physical, and financial needs and resources that can be used to enrich and expand the traditional educational programs. The strategy takes advantage of a fact of community life: Everyone can be both a learner and a teacher. Numerous programs have been developed to use community resources and volunteers, including school volunteer programs, field and study trips, peer tutoring, student-based enterprises, and experiential learning.

Strategy II: **Develop educational partnerships between the school system and schools and public and private service providers, business and industry, and civic and social service organizations.**

Today's complex and interrelated social and economic problems create a broad array of service needs in a community. Effectively meeting the variety of educational needs requires more resources than any single agency or organization can provide. This strategy encourages the development of educational partnerships that cooperate in the efficient and effective use of available resources and avoid unnecessary duplication. Such partnerships might focus on childcare and latchkey programs, anti-drug and substance abuse efforts, literacy and academic competencies, at-risk youth and minority assistance, community economic development, internships and work-study programs, and career awareness.

Strategy III: **Use public educational facilities as community service centers for meeting the educational, social, health, cultural, and recreational needs of all ages and sectors of the community.**

Economic and demographic changes have turned educators' attention to the needs and concerns of non-parents in the community. This strategy encourages opening school buildings on a planned, organized basis at hours other than the regular school day. It is designed to take advantage of the strong support that community centers generally receive in addition to the cost benefits of more efficient use.

Katherine Keough suggests that the current interest in pre-primary and continuing education programs offers many school districts an efficient use for classrooms and buildings left empty due to declining enrollments. (In chapter 2, we'll see how a school district in Roseville, Minn., does just that.) Further, Glen Earthman, a facilities planning expert, states that with the skyrocketing costs of new construction and energy, it no longer always makes sense to build new facilities for community use when school buildings are empty on evenings and weekends.

Common themes of community education

The community education concept is open to frequent misunderstanding. There are differing interpretations of the meaning of "community" as well as the parameters of "schooling." Are cooperative community ventures the goal, or improved academics for the traditional student? Does "community" encompass merely the immediate geographic area, or does it refer in a more global sense to all those agencies and institutions outside the school proper?

To help clarify matters, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation's Endowment Task Force formulated a set of universal characteristics that reflect the essence of community education. Community education, the task force determined, is characterized by:

- Citizen involvement in community problem solving and decision making, usually through community councils.
- Development and implementation of lifelong learning opportunities for learners of all ages, backgrounds, and needs.
- Use of community resources in the kindergarten through 12th grade curriculum.
- Partnerships with business, industry, and schools to enhance the learning climate.
- Optimum use of public education facilities by both young people and adults in the community.
- Coordination and collaboration among agencies and institutions to provide educational, social, economic, recreational, and cultural services to all members of the community.

Strategy IV: Encourage the development of an environment that fosters lifelong learning.

This strategy advocates the promotion of learning as a continuous, lifelong process for all people and the understanding of education as more than a series of terminal behaviors and unrelated experiences. It takes advantage of the fact that much learning takes place without formal instruction, both inside and outside the school setting. It encourages the development of lifelong education programs to meet the learning needs that change over a lifetime, including the need for new skills and knowledge. Possible programs and activities include early childhood education, extended-care and enrichment programs, adult education, vocational training and retraining programs, leisure time pursuits, and intergenerational programs.

Strategy V: Establish community involvement processes in educational planning and decision making.

The total community has a responsibility in the mission of educating all of its members. The rationale for involving the community in planning and decision making is based on the belief that citizens have a right and a duty to participate in determining community needs, in deciding priorities, and in selecting the most appropriate allocation of resources.

Moreover, this is a cyclical process, concerned with evaluation and change as well as initial planning. The strategy is designed to take advantage of one of the most basic facts in human relationships: Individuals who participate in planning and decision making develop feelings of ownership in the outcome.

"We try to involve everyone in education," says Bob Guttmann, director of community relations for the Pattonville, Miss., schools. "We believe that communication is important, and involvement is even more important. When people do things, they feel more a part of what's happening."

Encouraging broad-based involvement capitalizes on another principle. Generally, the greater the number and diversity of people involved in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of educational opportunities, the greater the likelihood that needs will be met and that support for education will be developed and maintained. Involvement and participation opportunities range from ongoing community advisory councils to ad hoc advisory task forces and special issue study committees.

Strategy VI: **Provide a responsive, community-based support system for collective action among all educational and community agencies to address both current quality-of-life issues of all citizens and specialized needs.**

This strategy recognizes the complexity of many of today's problems and underscores the fact that resolution of problems requires more resources than any single agency or organization can provide. Seeking out the involvement of other agencies can help address such social, health, educational, and economic issues as drug and substance abuse, housing, public safety and crime prevention, at-risk youth, violence and vandalism, teen pregnancy, and racial and minority concerns.

Strategy VII: **Develop a system that expedites home/school/community communication.**

Because public schools draw upon public resources, they must make a concentrated and systematic effort to communicate with all members of the community. Research shows that schools that involve all their publics and keep them informed have community support; those who fail to reach beyond their parent public do not.

Effective home/school/community communications go beyond news releases, speeches, newsletters, and open houses to include media coverage, home visitation by teachers and administrators, meet-the-community programs, school displays, and programs conducted away from school site.

Using these strategies for growth

With these strategies as a framework, we can see once more how the schools can use the community and the community can use the schools for mutual synergism and growth. The ultimate goal is to provide a responsive, community-based support system for collective action among all educational and community agencies to address educational concerns, current quality-of-life issues of all citizens, and specialized needs.

The following chapters cite specific examples of how schools today are using these strategies and offer suggestions on how to implement them in your community. The first two strategies, which address how schools can use community resources, are outlined in chapter 1, while strategies three and four, addressing how communities can use school resources, are the subject of chapter 2. Because strategy five focuses on two of the most crucial elements of any community education endeavor — planning and assessment and broad-based involvement of community members — two chapters (3 and 4) will examine how this best can be done. The sixth strategy, too, is intricately interwoven with the need for involvement of many agencies and is covered in these two chapters. The seventh, and last, strategy — public relations and communications — is the subject of chapter 5.

These strategies, of course, do not exist in a vacuum. They have overlapping characteristics and functions, as do the stories that we have chosen, somewhat arbitrarily, to illustrate them. The district that makes the most of these strategies in establishing home/school/community involvement will draw from them all, with similar overlapping and meshing of goals and activities.

Finally, the appendix is full of sample policy statements and resource lists that will help get you started as you open the door to the limitless possibilities of the learning society.

Case studies of effective home/school/community involvement

CHAPTER ONE

Partnerships: how schools use community resources

Chronically faced with limited resources, schools always have reached out to use community resources as a means of augmenting educational programs. Traditionally, such efforts centered on the use of school volunteers in the classroom. But society changes, and the traditional school volunteer — the at-home mother — is no longer as available as in the past.

To beef up programs for school-age kids today, districts are reaching out in a variety of creative ways. Strategies one and two advise school districts to focus on two specific resources: volunteers and partners. While the two may overlap, volunteers usually are individuals who work with students or teachers on a one-to-one basis. Today's volunteer, for instance, might be a senior citizen, a high school senior, or a local businessperson; in many communities, it is all of those. Partnerships, on the other hand, more often involve groups: public or private agencies, businesses and industry, or civic and social

[redacted]

organizations. We will look at how schools in Salt Lake City, Utah; Seattle, Wash.; Memphis, Tenn.; Springfield, Mass.; and Ankeny, Iowa, have used both these strategies most effectively, examining first their volunteer programs and then their partnerships. The results are impressive, but those districts with the greatest degree of success warn that strong organization is the key.

Volunteer programs still work

While there may be fewer mothers available to "help out" in the schools of the '80s and '90s, one of the most popular ways for schools to use the community is still through school volunteer programs.

The trend today is toward the development of a comprehensive, systemwide volunteer program and the employment of a professional person to coordinate the various aspects of the program. The coordination responsibilities are often part of the duties of a systemwide director of community relations or community education when such a position exists. Whatever the title of the position, the volunteer coordinator acts as a liaison among the administrators, teachers, and volunteers and relieves teachers of some of the responsibilities inherent in the operation of a volunteer program.

Success stories from Salt Lake City, Utah; Ankeny, Iowa; and Yelm, Wash., illustrate how solid a resource volunteers can be.

Volunteer power in Salt Lake City

In economically depressed Utah, the Salt Lake City schools get along with the lowest per-student funding in the country. But while the economy may be depressed, the educational system isn't. Salt Lake City makes up the difference with volunteer power — more than 17,000 volunteers who collectively have worked close to half a million hours in local schools. Valued at $5 per hour, their time has equaled a contribution of about $2.25 million since the program's start.

School volunteers are sought from every walk of life. Says Daphne Williams, coordinator of volunteer services, "We needed to expand the volunteer program and found that our best resources are businesses and senior citizens."

To encourage volunteerism among older citizens, Salt Lake City has developed a program called SMILES. Senior Motivators In Learning and Educational Services is a special volunteer program for those more than 55 years of age. It's a means of bringing them back into the schools they left so long ago. "Seniors require more nurturing than the average school volunteer," comments Williams, "but they also give the children more time, more hugs and affection, more caring than the average volunteer. We provide training, a newsletter, and recognition to let them know they're appreciated."

The rewards have been tremendous. "Children are wonderfully honest, and initially they may make negative comments about their older tutors. We train them to expect that," comments Williams. "Many kids today don't have an extended family and aren't accustomed to grandparents."

Once they're accustomed to them, youngsters respond particularly well to older tutors, according to Williams. Behavior problems cease and academic achievement increases under the loving guidance provided by SMILES volunteers. But students aren't the only ones who benefit from the program. A University of Pittsburgh study shows that the self-esteem of participating seniors grows immensely. "It helps them to extend themselves, to do something important, and to feel needed," says Williams. "Overwhelmingly, senior citizens feel good about this experience. We have many older volunteers who are in the school every single day, all day long." Helping them are many students who volunteer for peer tutoring.

Managing this level of volunteerism requires organization. Citizens in Salt Lake City formed a board that oversees the

Establishing a volunteer program

Volunteers can augment educational resources as well as enable teachers to devote more time to planning, diagnosing the needs of individual students, and prescribing learning activities to meet those needs. Because of the various ways volunteers can be used to strengthen learning experiences, an individual teacher may choose to establish a volunteer program for his or her classroom even if a schoolwide program does not exist.

Valuable as volunteers are, however, problems can develop, reports the National School Volunteer Program, Inc. (NSVP), if the role of the volunteer is not clearly defined from the beginning. Volunteers must understand that it is their role *always* to work under the direction and supervision of a teacher or other member of the school staff and *never* to be considered a substitute for a professional staff person.

In planning the school volunteer program, NSVP suggests these steps:

- Develop a written role description for volunteers.
- Define specific duties and time lines.
- Determine recruitment and screening strategies.
- Plan for volunteer orientation and training.
- Establish a procedure for ongoing assessment and evaluation of volunteers that includes recognition of volunteers' contributions.

The NSVP publication *Process for Volunteer Program Development* is designed to assist school systems and schools with limited budgets and varying degrees of expertise in using the many resources available. NSVP also has other reference materials pertinent to volunteer programs and resources. Contact them at 701 North Fairfax Street, Suite 320, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

various volunteer programs and raises funds to pay and provide training for the coordinators. The SMILES program and the secondary schools have paid coordinators; all other schools have a teacher who serves as volunteer specialist. Teams consisting of the principal, a teacher, and a business leader from the partnering company are set up in each school. Coordinators are responsible for setting up training, maintaining communications within the school and with each other, and providing recognition to volunteers.

This recognition is a very important element of Salt Lake City's program and is shown in a variety of ways. Schools give their volunteers a certificate of appreciation, a "check" that says "Thanks a million!", or a volunteer dinner or luncheon. On the other hand, some volunteers don't want to be recognized, and the schools try to respect that. The "thank you" that the volunteers like best, of course, is a written note from a child, and Salt Lake City teachers see that such notes get written periodically.

Volunteerism is so important to the school system that both the Utah governor and Salt Lake City's mayor signed a proclamation making September 1987 "We Salute School Volunteers Month." Each school in the city displayed a 12- by 2-foot banner that declared, "We Salute School Volunteers!"; and a host of activities was planned to honor Salt Lake's most important citizens.

Bridging the generations in Ankeny

Senior citizen volunteers in Ankeny, Iowa, are among that school district's most important citizens as well. A volunteer "visiting" program involving all of the elementary schools has turned around attitudes and may have saved a child's life.

The Ankeny program involves the fifth-grade classes, each of which is visited by a group of senior citizens. Dividing into small groups, the children spend time visiting with two seniors. A question-answer format is encouraged, and children are prepared ahead of time to think of questions they might want to ask.

The purpose of the program, according to Kevin Koester, director of community education, is "exchange of information — for senior citizens to come to know what kids are all about, and for youth to gain a deeper understanding of the history of our community and the lifestyle of the last generation

Do's and don'ts for using volunteers

Do

- Invite volunteers to serve as partners in your school.
- Clearly define for staff members and volunteers the differences in their tasks and roles.
- Encourage your staff to help decide which tasks volunteers should perform.
- Give volunteers tasks that complement the services of paid professional staff members.
- Assign one staff member the responsibility for administering the volunteer program.
- Provide an orientation program to acquaint volunteers with the school's functions, goals, and methods, as well as the nature of their tasks.
- Provide an ongoing, regularly scheduled training program.
- Request a specific commitment of time and/or resources from volunteers.
- Make assignments based upon skills, knowledge, interests, availability, and resources.
- Express appreciation. Volunteers need recognition as much as paid staff members.

Don't

- Regard volunteers as an appendage to your program, perhaps only to be tolerated.

- Leave role definition vague so that staff members and volunteers are unclear about who has responsibility in which area.

- Leave task identification entirely up to administrative personnel or the volunteers themselves.

- Use volunteers as a substitute for paid staff members.

- Distribute responsibility for administration of volunteer services among several staff members, especially at the beginning of the program.

- Put volunteers to work without knowing how to perform their tasks, and allow them to learn through trial and error.

- Be vague about what is expected of volunteers in terms of time and resources.

- Overuse, underuse, or misuse volunteers.

- Allow volunteers to function entirely on their own or in isolation from other volunteers and staff members.

- Ignore the need for encouragement and expressions of appreciation.

compared with that of today.

"Our research showed us that very few of the children in our district have grandparents living in or near the town," Koester says. "As a result, prejudices regarding the aged abound in the kids. At the same time, the older generation tends to be rather critical of youth today, and we want to combat that."

Senior participants in the program are prepared in a short training session as to what to expect from the children. The teachers prepare the children for the interviews by discussing thought-provoking questions that the children might ask. The format of the interviews is open-ended, and all kinds of topics get discussed, Koester says. After the classroom discussion, the seniors stay in the building and eat lunch with the students. The result is some real growth on both sides, according to Koester. "We've seen real changes in viewpoint of how the other side lives," he says. The seniors come away with a different attitude about what it is to be a child today. "They tell us that young people are not as 'ornery' as they thought.

"The young people, for their part, tend to expect old people to be 'crotchety' and 'out of touch,' " Koester notes. "Many had a tendency to avoid older people whom they didn't know." Participation in the program, he says, helped fifth graders to be better equipped to understand the elderly and to see that they are loving people.

The impact of the program on the community is significant, Koester reports. "We've had positive feedback from everyone — the kids, the senior citizens, the faculty, and the administrators. The letters written by the children to participating seniors indicate that the experience is a meaningful one for the children."

It was especially meaningful for one particular youngster, says Koester, a suicidally depressed fifth grader who telephoned one of the senior participants who had visited his class. The child had serious problems at home and felt there was no one he could turn to, but the intergenerational learning experience and the friendly demeanor of a particular participant made the child feel he had an option. He looked up the number and called the individual to share his troubles, indicating in the course of the conversation his feelings that he wanted to end his own life. As a result, the student was identified to school authorities, who were able to arrange for the child to receive the help he needed.

What is a school volunteer?

A school volunteer is any individual giving time to a school system at no cost to that system. Today more than 4.3 million school volunteers are:

- **Providing administrative advice.**
- **Working with administrators to revise scheduling techniques through computer technology.**
- **Serving on advisory committees.**
- **Tutoring individual students.**
- **Providing one-to-one attention to gifted and talented students.**
- **Providing assistance in special projects such as home construction, marketing, finance, science, and math technology.**
- **Assisting in health, sex, and drug education programs.**
- **Arranging and supervising special holiday programs, assembly programs, and field trips.**

— National School Volunteer Program, Inc.

Ankeny seniors also participate in a Retired Senior Volunteer Program, where they provide assistance to teachers in clerical areas such as checking tests, putting up bulletin boards, and preparing materials. "We've used senior talent very little in the tutorial area," Koester admits, "but that is changing. This year, for the first time, we used some seniors in our reading program. Frankly, what we have learned from the intergenerational learning project has led us to expand our senior volunteer program to give them more responsibility.

"We are working toward establishing a learning society," Koester maintains. "Part of the general community education process is to be a catalyst for community betterment and personal growth. Our role is to identify community needs and then to get involved in seeking out resources to meet those needs."

A thousand volunteers in Yelm

Volunteerism also appeals to older citizens in Yelm, Wash. Many enjoy tutoring in the elementary school or in the adult literacy program, which offers free tutoring in reading by volunteers. "They just are so thrilled to be involved in the schools," says Cecilia Jenkins, director of community education. "Otherwise, many of these people would have no contact with the school system. The rewards are great all around!"

In a town of only 10,000 residents, more than 1,000 volunteers are involved in the activities of Yelm's community education program. Some 200 people of all ages come into the schools every week to tutor, correct papers, and serve as classroom and library aids. Hundreds of others help at book fairs, serve as volunteer coordinators, and help promote community education in other ways.

Partnerships go a step further

Useful and cost-effective as a volunteer program can be, sometimes it simply isn't enough. Recruitment may be difficult, and funds may not be sufficient to underwrite the kinds of substantive programs needed. A number of school districts have turned to a relatively newer concept — partnerships — to reach out to the larger community.

In her 1986 *School Partnership Handbook*, Susan Otterbourg, coordinator of the first and second National Symposiums on Partnerships in Education, sponsored by the President's Advisory Council on Private Sector Initiatives, cautioned that partnerships are not a panacea and usually will not pay for such things as teacher salaries or building maintenance. However, she indicated a long list of potential benefits reported by partnership leaders in more than 100 school systems, from the widening of students' learning horizons to improved morale among industry personnel.

School/business partnerships unite two distinctly different segments of the community in a sharing of public and private resources. A wide range of programs and activities has been developed under this type of educational partnership. Besides direct involvement in schools, businesses have offered jobs and job counseling, assisted in solving management and logistical problems and, in some instances, used their influence on political and financial issues affecting the schools.

Another form of educational partnership is foundations. In this approach, independent, tax-exempt foundations are established to raise funds to support educational activities. The 1984 Foundation Center statistics reported by Anne Lewis in the American Association of School Administrators' publication *Partnerships ... Connecting School and Community* indicated that of the nearly 2,000 foundation grants of $5,000 or more, about two-thirds were for program development and one-third for capital support.

Although often not as well-publicized as school/business partnerships, educational partnerships between schools and agencies and organizations, including institutions of higher learning, also cover a wide range of activities. For example, Alma, Mich., has a partnership agreement with the park and recreation department, the school system, and Alma College that deals with joint programming among the three agencies. In Lincoln, Neb., the agreement between Southeast Community College and the school system in its service area provides for a leadership position in school buildings and includes a contractual arrangement for the services of a community services director. In St. Louis Park, Minn., the partnership takes the form of a comprehensive agreement between the city of St. Louis Park and the school system.

Of course, no specific educational partnership model is guaranteed to be successful. As Lewis commented, "There are, as yet, no clear-cut formulas for success in developing school/business partnerships. ... In one year alone, there were more than 46,000 such programs in place, and even though they involved just 20 percent of school districts [but 80 percent of city districts], they differed so in scope and objectives that it is difficult to state categorically what works and what doesn't." Program synopses from schools in Springfield, Mass.; Salt Lake City, Utah; Memphis, Tenn.; and Seattle, Wash., may help give a clue as to what does work.

Starting small in Springfield

The potential for successful development of an educational partnership is greater when efforts are not initiated during a crisis situation when stress factors, possible adversary relations, and negative reactions may exist. Successful partnerships often have begun with a small, relatively simple project that had strong possibilities for success. The success of even a small project is likely to gain supporters for partnership efforts and create a climate for more ambitious ventures.

One district that started small with its partnering efforts is Springfield, Mass., where a unique kind of partnership began in 1979 when the school system began seeking volunteers to help in the schools on a weekly basis. "We actually arranged to receive some sales training," says program founder Carol Kinsley, who serves as director of public relations for the Springfield school system. "Then we began knocking on doors." Initially, about a half dozen companies responded positively to the request to release employees during work hours to tutor in the public schools.

There are now more than 170 businesses actively involved in education in Springfield. The benefits, says Kinsley, have been incredible. Major corporations like Monsanto and Digital Equipment Corporation join with local banks and smaller groups to provide a variety of services and resources to the schools, and school volunteers have become only a small part of an effort that has grown and grown.

Out of the school volunteer program and efforts to get the business community involved grew a new idea. That idea became Partnerships for Excellence, a cooperative effort among businesses, institutions of higher education, community groups, and the school department, whose mission was to set up partnerships between the school and the community and to reach for excellence. The results have been dramatic and exciting, says Ann Southworth, a Springfield resident who served on the steering committee that initiated the program. Dozens of specific programs, called School-Business Partnerships, have sprung up between the schools and the business community. Companies have adopted schools, participated in tutorial programs, provided everything from incentive gifts to computer systems, and become involved in programs to help individual students.

The Friendly Readers Program is just one example of the

Constraints on partnership development

Although the potential impact of educational partnerships is great, there are constraints to their development. Issues involving turf and traditional competitive attitudes often cause problems. Every community has a network of governmental and profit and non-profit agencies, but cooperation among the bureaucratic entities does not occur easily.

The traditional model of education may be the major constraint to the development of educational partnerships. David Seeley, in *Home-School-Community Partnership as a Reform Strategy,* suggests that because:

> The "professional service delivery" model of education has become institutionalized over many decades and is deeply embedded in the policies and practices of school systems and in the habits and attitudes of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and citizens. . . . many [professional staff] have such strong orientation to the professional "service delivery" approach that they see their job as delivering services *to* students, parents, and the community, rather than working *with* them to produce learning.

Another frequent constraint is the absence of regular communications among schools and other agencies and organizations. The problems related to inadequate or nonexistent communications are often complicated by real and perceived differences in organizational patterns and operating procedures. For example, school budgets are not easily altered on short notice, and businesses may be reluctant to make long-term commitments, especially in a new partnership venture. Time restrictions and the "place-boundness" of personnel are other hindrances.

many outgrowths of School-Business Partnerships. The program, sponsored by a participating business, offers elementary school students incentives for reading. To receive the bonuses, children must give an oral report, known as a "book chat," to a volunteer. The program, which runs for a given segment of time each year, has been highly successful at encouraging reading, and experience has shown that the "book chats" — individual attention from caring adults — were an incentive. The recipient of national recognition from *Family Circle* magazine, the Friendly Readers Program has influenced Springfield children to read more than 80,000 books since the program's inception.

Another type of partnership developed between the University of Massachusetts and the school system. The university provides resources and shares expertise in a program known as Academy for Excellence. Professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators, leadership workshops, and summer training opportunities — all have been part of the Academy for Excellence.

Through this partnership, Springfield educators have become aware of the five characteristics of effective schools: strong leadership, good school climate, emphasis on basic skills, high expectations, and measurement of results. Problem-solving groups in each school then set about attacking their own problems. Administrators, teachers, parents, students, and university people have worked together in such areas as raising attendance and reducing the dropout rate.

And the benefits are mutual. "Local businesses know that a growing community is in their best interest," says Southworth. "Children are our future. The business community is ensuring the quality of future employees by helping the local school system to do a good job. Their involvement also will help attract local kids back home after college. In a real way, the school system is a key to economic growth."

One of Springfield's most successful projects involved a special friendship that developed between Massachusetts Mutual Life and Bridge Academy, a local alternative school that serves the needs of students who cannot function in the routine school environment. Initially the focus of the project was to build self-esteem in troubled students. Massachusetts Mutual sponsored a workshop for teachers, sharing an expensive commercial program on building self-esteem that the company had used with its own professionals. The teachers then were able to bring the concepts they had learned back to the school environment.

But the program didn't stop there. The company took steps to make the school, which was in a state of disrepair, more functional and attractive. The name was changed to Bridge Academy to eliminate any stigma they felt could be associated with "alternative school." A tutorial program was begun, which had Massachusetts Mutual employees working with students on a one-to-one basis. Next, Massachusetts Mutual began bringing students into the work place. Mentorships — personal relationships between individual students and company employees — developed. Efforts were made to provide constant interaction between employees and students.

The results? Absenteeism was reduced, the dropout rate was lowered, grades improved. An independent study documented the importance of Massachusetts Mutual's involvement, but the real measure of success was evident in the students themselves. One-time problem students began looking forward to college and careers. Bridge Academy held graduation exercises for the first time. The parents were proud, the students were proud, and the community was proud of a partnership that worked.

"In Springfield, we've learned that people are our most important resource," Southworth comments. "The community is not isolated from the school system. They support each other, and together we're making a good school system better and better."

The other half of Salt Lake City's story

Volunteers are really only half the story in Salt Lake City. Business partnerships are a big part of the Salt Lake City program, linking the schools with the community. Says Williams, "We have joined with different businesses in the community to set up mutually agreeable programs." Such programs may release volunteers to offer tutoring, provide help with enrichment, or share an area of expertise. Some businesses offer incentive programs. "It's really up to the participating company to provide whatever means of assistance they want," says Williams.

Mostly local businesses are involved in the Salt Lake City program, although IBM and a few other large companies participate as well. The benefits are many and varied. A floral shop gives bouquets as a reward for scholastic achievement. A local

Benefits of educational partnerships

For students:

- Students' learning horizons are expanded, particularly in their awareness of the worlds of work, science, technology, and the arts as well as in their awareness of the relationship of school work to employment.
- Students learn that adults care, develop increased self-confidence, and receive important encouragement to stay in school, seek training after high school, and secure employment after graduation.

For the school system and its staff:

- Teachers and staff perceive increased "caring" in people and organizations outside the schools, and increased communication and trust between education and the private sector.
- Opportunities arise to access previously unknown but available resources from the private sector and community organizations.

For business:

- Businesses are portrayed in a more favorable light, and the publicity they receive reinforces corporate and organizational efforts in the area of community relations, particularly community service.
- As awareness of educational problems increases, businesses gain a greater appreciation of schools' strengths and weaknesses and, in some cases, experience the satisfaction of successfully addressing problems through combined efforts.

- The morale of company personnel at all levels of management and operations goes up.
- Summer work forces often develop, providing opportunities for pre-training experiences for employment after high school.

For the community at large:

- Community members' awareness increases, especially concerning the needs of schools and, more specifically, concerning the support and community resources available and necessary to help meet those needs.
- A spirit of cooperation and involvement grows at a time when many citizens might feel alienated from the public schools.

For parents:

- Parents' involvement in and positive attitudes toward public education increase as they see their children benefitting from partnership programs.
- The communications gap that often exists between parents and students and business and civic representatives narrows through their mutual concern and support for public education.
- Many parents are served directly by adjunct partnership activities, such as health screening clinics.

— Susan Otterbourg
School Partnership Handbook

power company provides one-on-one tutors and sponsors a Christmas party, complete with Santa and a gift for each child, in its partner school each year. "The school is in an impoverished area, and for many of the children that gift is the only one they receive," Williams notes. Although a major expense for the company, it is "done out of love," she says.

A unique incentive plan is sponsored by a local airline, which challenges children in danger of failing to "turn themselves around." Those who meet agreed-upon goals are rewarded with a "Turnaround Flight" — free airfare to Denver for the child and one family member, plus a full day of meals and activities. The program is "a wonderful incentive for kids in a

Perspective on partnerships

The partnership approach provides both a rationale and a method for involving all segments of the community in helping to expand learning opportunities and improve educational achievement. The idea of working in partnership implies a cooperative approach that can be used to bridge divergent interests and increase the understanding of the differing perspectives that the partners bring to the educational process.

The term educational partnership encompasses three levels of working relationships between schools and other segments of the community involving varying degrees of cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. The levels can be viewed as a continuum:

- Cooperation is at one end, implying a simple working together toward a common goal.
- Coordination is in the middle range, entailing a sharing of resources and implying joint planning, development, and implementation of programs and actions.
- Collaboration is at the other end, implying greater sharing and a more intensive, concerted effort.

low-income area," says Williams, and it has proven highly successful. "For most of the children, it is the first airplane ride of their lives. It has really made a difference in the lives of a lot of kids." Good students are not left out of the fun. They can work to qualify for an "On-Course Flight," a reward for maintaining a given level of performance.

Memphis adores its schools

Things were a bit more down to earth in Memphis where, in 1979, not a soul would say positive things about public education in the city, according to school district spokesperson Barbara Russell. Racial tensions generated by school busing had led to widespread distrust and a massive exodus from the public schools. "The school system had a terrible image," says Russell. "There was chaos in the schools, and it was damaging our ability to educate effectively."

Out of this turbulent beginning came a program that was to revolutionize the city's school system and gain it national attention. It was called Adopt-A-School.

"When it began, we just wanted to change the image of the local school system," says Russell, director of the Adopt-A-School program. "We decided that the way to do this was to get people meaningfully involved in the educational process. PTA was no longer working — too many people had taken their children out of the schools. We had to look beyond the parents and bring the broader community into the schools so that they could see what was really happening."

"We knew there was a wealth of human resources out there," Russell goes on, "so it became our goal to use them to enhance and enrich the educational process, by matching the resources with the needs of the schools. We also wanted to give kids opportunities to go into the workplace and learn about what goes on there."

Another goal, she says, was to make Memphis residents proud of their school system. That goal has been met unquestionably. In fact, Russell claims, the Adopt-A-School program has been responsible for drawing new industry to Memphis. "Companies have told us that their decision to locate here was in part based on the existence of this program. People are proud to be part of Adopt-A-School," she maintains.

The Adopt-A-School program identifies needs and resources and matches schools with adopting businesses. A few schools are paired with two or three companies, but most of the adoptions are on a one-to-one basis. After that, Russell says, "The sky is the limit." Companies provide volunteers for tutoring, offer resource speakers, and sponsor career days. Every participating business appoints a coordinator, and committees in each business evaluate resources and plan activities. A volunteer coordinator in each school acts as a liaison with the adopting business.

Developing a partnership

No single model exists for developing educational partnerships. However, each partnership has "sharing" in common. Partners may cooperate in a variety of ways involving some type of sharing. The extent of the cooperation depends on each partner's willingness to share its resources, i.e., facilities, staff, equipment, resources, expertise, and so on.

Planning, quite naturally, is the key to success. Partnership development must take into consideration that each potential partner involves both people and structured organizational relationships. Attention must be paid to understanding the structure and operation of each and to establishing feelings of trust and mutual respect among the personnel involved.

The planning should be done by a team small enough to function effectively, but as representative as possible of all interested parties. Often this will involve a representative from the school district's central office with authority to make decisions and commitments relative to the proposed partnership, a school business officer or staff person, a representative of the school site if programs are to be school-based, and at least one representative of each potential partner with authority to make decisions and commitments relative to the proposed project.

Partnership agreements may be formal or informal, but some written documentation of the commitments and organizational structure is recommended. At

Creativity is a hallmark of the Memphis program. One company sponsors a career-development project with fourth- to sixth-grade students. Students interview employees and study the structure and function of the company. They are brought to the workplace, paired with employees, and "shadow" their partners through a typical workday. The project culminates with an essay contest that challenges the students to consider, "What I would do if I were president of the company." The

minimum, such agreements should contain:

- The reason(s) for each partner entering into the agreement.
- The purpose of the agreement, often including goals and objectives.
- The extent of each agency's commitment of staff, facilities, equipment, supplies, and funds.
- The effective date of the agreement and termination date, if any.
- The plan to distribute any resources or income generated.
- The signature of official representative(s) of each partner.

Other items often contained in written agreements include a budget for activities described in the agreement; a description of required financial reports; a plan that delineates the responsibilities for supervision and decision making; job descriptions for each new staff position, if any, created by the partnership; and a plan to evaluate programs or activities undertaken as a result of the partnership.

winner and several runners-up are made president and vice presidents of the company for a day.

Many companies offer incentive gifts to encourage students to bring up their grades. One organization, paired with a school in a low-income area, challenges students to sign a contract pledging to improve their grades in two subjects. Students who fulfill their contracts are awarded new bicycles, an attractive incentive that has proven highly successful at improving academic achievement.

But benefits go far beyond educational enrichment. In one ghetto school, the adopting company arranged and paid for visual screening of every student and then picked up the tab for the students' eyeglasses. Another company hired two teachers for its adopted school after students expressed a wish to learn ballet and French. Some adopters offer field trips. One company arranged to take its city children to see cotton growing on a farm, and then to a local cotton gin to learn how the raw material is processed into cloth.

Programs have been adopted as well as schools. Businesses have supported the school system's drive to establish "Just Say No!" clubs to encourage students to fight drug abuse. Federal Express promotes career development by organizing career clubs in local schools. Activities are sponsored to help students learn about various careers.

A Summer Scholars program sponsored by one business puts high school juniors on a college campus to get a firsthand taste of what higher education is like. Students pay a nominal fee to ensure their commitment, and the adopter pays the balance of the cost for the weeklong program. Businesses also make other resources available to encourage educational development. Schools have used adopters' expertise and resources to help develop educational materials, tutorial guides, and career education packets.

Adopting businesses include every element of the local community. Several national corporations are involved, but Russell says they are careful not to go only to major companies. Most participants are small, local businesses. The list includes a bank, a hospital, the local newspapers, two television stations, and several churches. The church adoptions have worked well, says Russell, adding that they see no conflict with school policy on religion. "They don't try to evangelize," she says. "The goal is to help the children, and they do it wonderfully."

Sometimes companies provide money, but financial assistance is not the basis of the Adopt-A-School program. "We don't ask participating companies for funds," Russell says. "I tell the businesses that it's a copout to write a check," she adds. "We want their people, their expertise, and their time."

Memphis companies, it seems, are more than happy to comply. "The program has grown tremendously since its inception nine years ago," Russell maintains. "Our business community loves it. We almost never see a company leave the program, and exciting new ideas are constantly developing."

A California newspaper recently explored the Memphis Adopt-A-School program, running a major article under a headline that Russell says perfectly captures the attitude in Memphis. The headline? "Memphis Adores Its Schools!"

While the Memphis schools make a particular effort to discourage financial contributions per se from their adopting businesses, other highly successful programs have asked companies to put their money on the line, along with personal contact and shared ideas and resources. In fact, in the Seattle, Wash., schools, partner companies actually pay a membership fee.

Investing in the Seattle schools

Partnering between schools and businesses in Seattle is the concern of a unique organization called Private Initiatives in Public Education or PIPE. The group is a private, non-profit corporation that was founded in 1979 by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and is owned by the local business community.

PIPE's mission is to provide better resources for education by pairing businesses with schools. "The companies really outdo themselves," says Cynthia Shelton, executive director. "The resources are absolutely incredible."

Starting with just five high schools, PIPE now oversees partnerships affecting every school in the city. Every high school in Seattle is paired with a major corporation. In addition, each of the area's hospitals and community colleges is linked to one of the schools. Middle schools, alternative schools, and elementary schools are each paired with one, two, or three medium to small companies."PIPE is a process, not a program," says Shelton. "We identify needs, evaluate resources, and then make successful pairings." Specific programs are then decided on by the individual companies and schools involved. Partnership activities vary, depending on the resources of the company and the needs of the school. Companies provide tutorial assistance, incentive plans that encourage students to improve grades, company tours, guest speakers, classroom enrichment, and a host of other benefits.

Because PIPE works on behalf of the business community, participating companies are strongly committed to making the partnerships work. Companies pay substantial membership fees, which are graduated depending on the size of the company and range from $500 to $2,500. "The fees are one reason why the programs have been so successful," says Shelton. "The companies know they have an investment in their partner school, and they are committed to that school."

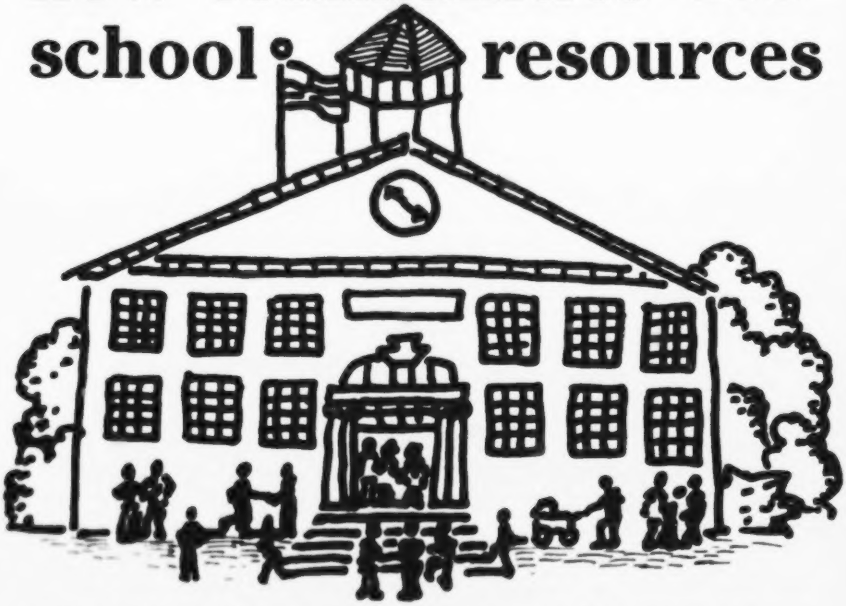
Company membership fees provide most of the funding for PIPE. The school district pays a set amount annually, and PIPE receives some grant funds. "We don't do much fund raising," Shelton notes, saying, "We're too busy organizing programs." The group does sponsor an annual auction, however, using the funds raised to give "mini-grants" to deserving teachers to enable them to purchase classroom materials.

PIPE sponsors a variety of programs in support of education in Seattle. It offers a yearlong teacher sabbatical to encourage further education and a program to place teachers in temporary positions with local companies to help them learn more about the working world. A PIPE-sponsored internship program encourages participating companies to hire students in short-term positions and offer them career training. PIPE hosts community information fairs where participating businesses can promote their services and share information on their educational programs. PIPE also publishes a directory of community services.

"Businesses want to be involved with education," says Shelton. "Everyone benefits from these partnerships."

CHAPTER TWO

School centers: how communities use school resources



Public education's awareness of the need to reach out and use community resources — and the ability to act on that need — through volunteer programs and educational partnerships is fairly well established. Few districts do not have some kind of community outreach, although not nearly enough use community resources to their maximum potential.

What schools have not become adept at is promoting ways in which the community can use these resources, thus completing the circle that defines community education in the learning society: schools using community resources and communities, in turn, using school resources. To put it in the words of community educators: "The goal is a society where everyone teaches, everyone learns."

Interestingly, not too many years ago, communities were far more inclined to focus on the school in this manner. In rural communities particularly, the school, if not a center for lifelong learning, at least was the hub of community social and

Strategy III: Use public educational facilities as community service centers for meeting the educational, social, health, cultural, and recreational needs of all ages and sectors of the community.

Strategy IV: Encourage the development of an environment that fosters lifelong learning.

political life. Socials, musicals, spelling bees, sports events, flea markets, May Day festivities, and community meetings are just a few of the events that brought together members of the community at the school hub. School consolidations eliminated for many districts this "school center," while societal changes — faster transportation, better roads, shopping malls, and a host of others — hastened its demise, allowing other kinds of activities to compete with the school's offerings.

For schools to recapture that role, their use must transcend a mere social function. Comments Vincent Vento, assistant superintendent of the Rockwood School District in Eureka, Mo., "Our goal is to make the community one classroom. We want to get as many people involved in learning as we possibly can."

Strategies three and four address that caveat as they urge schools to use their facilities as community service centers for meeting the educational, social, health, cultural, and recreational needs of all ages and sectors of the community — in short, encouraging the development of an environment that fosters lifelong learning.

Efforts to implement lifelong learning in the United States have focused on adult education, generating concern that adult education is overshadowing the totality of the thrust of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning and adult education are not synonymous, even though they are frequently perceived to be. To address the educational needs of the entire community, the concept of lifelong learning must be extended to encompass all age groups, from the very young to the elderly and all groups in between.

School districts are beginning to adopt this expanded view. We will look at how school districts in Missouri, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Washington have addressed all age groups with programs for extended-day care and preschool enrichment, programs for adults that range from community centers to illiteracy classes, and intergenerational programs that focus on the needs of senior citizens. Finally, we'll see how the Eureka, Mo., and Yelm, Wash., schools put it all together with comprehensive programs for everyone.

Early childhood and extended-care programs

Schools are being urged to assume many new programs for preschool-age children as well as those who attend class during the conventional school day. Early childhood education, parent/child enrichment, and extended-care or latchkey programs are three very different kinds of programs that focus on the young.

Why has this come about? Research has shown that a child's personality is developed by age 3 and that approximately 50 percent of an individual's intelligence measurable at age 17 is achieved by age 4. To make sure that these early formative years are not wasted and to capitalize on the fact that between birth and kindergarten the parents are the child's most significant teachers, programs are being developed that link child development and effective parenting.

Extended-care programs, on the other hand, provide communities with a means of solving a serious problem: the increasing numbers of latchkey children. Extended care usually encompasses care for children before and after school when parents are still at work. Rather than be competition for established daycare centers, these programs provide care and activities for a growing group of children who otherwise might be entirely unsupervised during these hours because parents can't afford daycare or none is available.

Early childhood and extended-care programs are a logical function of community education programs, says Marilyn Kerns, community education center director for the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., because meeting the needs of people outside of the traditional school program is part of the community education process. "That is the philosophy behind lifelong learning," she says. "A healthy family environment benefits the entire community. Helping to provide that healthy family environment is a part of the job of the school system." Here is how schools in Roseville and St. Paul, Minn., and Eureka, Mo., are working to foster a healthy family environment.

Preschool comes first in Roseville

In the Roseville, Minn., schools, a separate building — a former school no longer in use — houses the district's model program for early childhood and the family education center. The media center has been converted into a toy lending library where individuals, babysitters, and daycare operators can borrow toys for young children. "The toy library enables people to test toys before buying them," Jim Klassen, director of community education, says, "and the library professional can educate and advise people on how they should be used. It's a great service and

The benefits of early childhood programs

The benefits of early childhood, family education programs are emphasized in the Minnesota Department of Education's 1987 informational brochure. Schools benefit from a higher level of parental involvement in children's education that continues throughout the school years. Parents report increased satisfaction in their parenting roles. They value the support of other parents as well as the skills and understanding acquired.

In addition to strengthened families, the programs have cost-effectiveness implications: Research indicates that dollars spent on early childhood family education are more than repaid by savings in remedial costs during later school years. The early investment increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the total investment already made in education by society. Participating children tend to require fewer special services and experience more success during their ensuing school years.

The goals of these programs generally are to:

- Support parents in their efforts in raising children.

educational tool."

The early childhood program is unique because it requires a significant degree of involvement on the part of the parents. Funded in part by the state of Minnesota, the program boasts a staff of certified instructors and a broad spectrum of weekly classes for both parent and child. Numerous opportunities for field trips — to the children's theater, the zoo, museums, and parks — are provided. A quarterly newsletter is sent to every home in the district with a preschool child.

St. Paul schools watch over kids

Numerous schools in St. Paul, Minn., provide before- and after-school care for school-age children. The self-supporting programs cost less than daycare available elsewhere, according to

- Offer child development information and alternative parenting techniques.
- Help create effective communication between parents and their children.
- Supplement the discovery and learning experiences of children.
- Promote positive parental attitudes throughout their children's school years.

The programs usually are developed to coincide with an elementary school's attendance area. Although they are designed to serve all parents who choose to participate, special sessions may be planned for groups of parents with specific needs or concerns, i.e., single parents, teenage parents, parents of handicapped children, foster parents, grandparents, and others. They provide a variety of services between the ages of birth and kindergarten enrollment and may assist parents in obtaining other family services from health and human service agencies.

Kerns, and many also provide extended care for kindergarten children and all-day care during the summer.

"Extended care is a wonderful idea, and the program is terrific," Kerns says. The concept grew out of concerns many school principals had for children who were being left at school early by working parents and staying on the school grounds long after the school day ended. "Once we started implementing extended-care options in the public schools, we found that more and more people were interested in them," she says.

The service is provided before and after school for a nominal fee, and features qualified instructors offering educational, social, and recreational programs as well as busing to the child's neighborhood school. Users of the service cut all across the economic spectrum. Scholarships are available for families in need, and the state of Minnesota provides some subsidies through the county welfare department.

Extended-care programs are not daycare centers, says Kerns, and the school system is not trying to compete with private centers. "What we are trying to do is make good use of facilities that are already there. At the same time, the child benefits in a lot of ways." The extended-care option provides children with opportunities to play with friends, do homework, and enjoy the resources of the school facility, while being supervised by qualified individuals. Snacks are provided, and some programs also offer a hot breakfast.

"The kids love it," says Kerns, particularly because the programs create an entirely different social atmosphere. "The children are in a familiar environment, but they can play with friends, talk, and enjoy activities that they are not able to do in school. Good, safe child care is a vital need in today's society."

Rockwood's well-rounded approach

For the community's youngest citizens, the Rockwood school district in Eureka, Mo., offers a vast early childhood program. The district provides developmental screening of children up to age 5, a preschool program that enrolls 365 students, and a state-funded program called Parents as First Teachers that helps parents learn effective ways to encourage learning in their young children.

Basic parenting classes also are administered through the school district. "These classes are for everyone," says Vento,

Extended care guidelines

School districts considering extended-care programs for children should make an assessment to find out what needs are, and then assess resources to determine what facilities are available, suggests Marilyn Kerns, community education center director for the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. The next step is to examine other programs to see how they are operated and what options they provide. The last step, says Kerns, is to design a program that meets the specific needs of the local community.

Kerns currently is working on developing guidelines for staffing and environment of extended-care facilities. The guidelines under development are grouped into six categories: staff qualifications and ratios, facility, program and curriculum, health and safety, nutrition, and organization and administration.

"but we are especially trying to reach out to so-called 'high-risk' families. The goal is to give people a resource to help them become better parents."

Rockwood's kindergarten program is supplemented by an extended-day option that provides a full day of structured educational and play activities for young children whose parents work outside the home.

For older children, an after-school community education program offers a variety of courses to elementary students, and a latchkey program provides structured activities in a caring environment before and after the regular school day.

Adult programs are far-reaching

Most school districts offer some kind of adult education program. The challenge of a learning society is to begin developing many other kinds of programs for adults: recreational activities, vocational retraining programs, parenting classes, family togetherness nights — anything that meets the needs of the adults in a specific community. Different schools will come up with new and innovative ways to make it work, but often the school becomes a community center, where activities extend far beyond the traditional school day and calendar year. An added bonus is that such programs go far in convincing the community where the schools exist that the system they represent is worthy of support.

Roseville puts available space to special use

Roseville, Minn., educators take seriously the idea of schools as community centers. As early as 1976, Klassen says, the school board adopted a formal mission statement and a set of objectives specifying that all school facilities were to be used for the maximum benefit of the community. Having this statement become part of official school board policy was absolutely crucial, according to Klassen. "It helped immensely to be able to quote this policy when anyone expressed an opposing view."

Declining enrollment in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a dramatic impact on the Roseville school district. Student population dropped 50 percent in a 10-year period. Roseville closed 6 elementary schools, 3 junior highs, and 1 high school. But the Roseville school buildings have not been allowed to go to waste. Still owned by the school district, they have been transformed into self-sufficient facilities that meet many community needs — 2 former junior high school buildings now house community centers, complete with swimming pools and gymnasiums. Leasing space to nonprofit agencies involved with health and human services has enabled the district to maintain the buildings and retain 40 to 50 percent of the facilities for community education activities.

Roseville has attacked the problem of adult illiteracy by establishing an adult high school in another of its closed buildings. The school serves 300 students between the ages of 17 and 70, enabling them to attain a high school diploma, adult basic education certificate, or GED. The program, says Klassen, is growing by leaps and bounds.

The senior citizen center is housed in one of the district's school community centers. The senior citizens have formed a board of directors to manage the operations of the center. A dining room serves meals to elderly residents each day, while a home-delivered meals program based in the center meets the needs of house-bound citizens. The center features a store — the Senior Boutique — which sells homemade crafts on consignment, with 15 percent of the revenues retained by the center for senior programs. Health screenings, enrichment classes, discussion groups, and recreation facilities are some of the services provided.

"We have people who used to be cooped up with no reason to get up in the morning, and now they're coming to the center and getting actively involved in meaningful experiences," says Klassen. The most important role of the center, he feels, is providing new friendships. "So many older people are terribly lonely and just want a friend."

Leasing the school facilities to human services and social welfare agencies from the county, says Klassen, has proven to be a key to success for the community education program. "Bringing groups together to share their resources has a tremendous multiplier effect," he believes. "There is a synergism taking place that is truly exciting and it has led to all sorts of new cooperation, ranging from planning activities for a community Halloween party to developing a policy for dealing with AIDS."

The secret of success in community education is dialogue. "There are only so many dollars to go around and there are tremendous human needs out there," Klassen explains, "but there are also tremendous human resources. It is essential that we plan together rather than independently."

One outgrowth of bringing people and resources together in the community center was the establishment of a community chemical health council with funding from the state. "Most school districts put state substance abuse funds into a secondary education program. We took a different approach," says Klassen. "Drugs are not a school problem — drugs are a community problem. Rather than working to solve the drug problem within the school community, we designed a community chemical health program that includes people from schools, churches, PTAs, businesses, local government — everyone."

The results have been phenomenal, he says. Cooperation with the park and recreation bureau produced a program called Teens Needing Teens (TNT), aimed at giving junior high school students places to go and things to do, while teaching them to seek "natural highs." A high school program called Partners In Prevention uses positive peer pressure to combat substance abuse. An annual "Pipfest" — a conference for student leaders held over a long weekend — helps kids to become exemplary models for their peers and enlists their cooperation in designing effective school programs. "Kids today are really searching for healthy role models," Klassen asserts.

One thing that makes the Roseville school system unique is that each elementary school has a full-time community education coordinator and a neighborhood community council. The result is that all the neighborhood schools are used constantly. "The interesting thing," Klassen notes, "is that 80 percent of the people in the area don't have children in the school system." Roseville currently has 3,000 people taking evening classes, and 40 percent of those don't have children in school.

"If you can get people into the building, you have an opportunity to significantly affect their attitudes," Klassen believes, "and getting them involved in a meaningful activity quadruples your opportunity to gain their support."

"When we go to the public with bond issues, we find we

The growth in intergenerational programming

The National Council on Aging defines intergenerational programming as "activities or programs that increase cooperation, interaction, or exchange between any two generations. It involves the sharing of skills, knowledge, or experience between old and young."

During the past decade, intergenerational programming increased significantly in the United States. As researchers Nancy Henkin, Miriam Spector, and Steven Tunick report in the program development manual *Intergenerational Programs: A Resource for Community Renewal*, the majority of current programs have been developed to provide a specific educational service or to link generations in cultural projects. In addition to focusing on a particular skill or educational need, the programs are designed to help youth gain realistic expectations about their adult lives and to encourage them to think about sources of satisfaction beyond work and the possibility of spending longer periods in noncareer jobs.

have a whole new group of supporters," Klassen says. A recent move to increase local taxes received a 90 percent "yes" vote. Senior citizens, traditionally an automatic "no" vote on tax increases, actually went door-to-door encouraging people to support the measure.

People want to identify with their neighborhood, Klassen believes. "The community education program is one of the best marketing tools we've ever had," he continues. "People want to buy homes in Roseville because of the fine reputation of our community education programs. What we've got here is very special."

Brockton celebrates community creativity

"Generating an atmosphere where education and recreation are part of a lifelong living experience" — that is the philosophy of

According to Kathlyn Thorp in *Intergenerational Programs: A Resource for Community Renewal*, intergenerational programs can:

- Provide meaningful roles and a sense of self-worth for all participants.
- Encourage the development of lasting friendships and relationships.
- Provide the "volunteer power" to help more people live full and healthy lives.
- Enhance and enrich the programs of many agencies and organizations in a community.
- Break down stereotypes and barriers that exist between generations when there is limited contact.
- Promote partnerships among different agencies and organizations in a community.

the Brockton, Mass., school system, according to Harry Allen, a high school teacher there.

Several years ago, the Brockton school district established a cultural committee to organize worthwhile events for everyone in the city, Allen notes. One goal of the committee was to look at summertime activities. There had been a giant fair every year in Brockton, but over the years it had disintegrated. There simply was not enough to do in the summer, he explained.

"The committee was very creative," Allen maintains. One of the many things to result was a summer extravaganza called Summerfest. Held at Brockton High School, which Allen says is the largest secondary school in the country with an enrollment of 6,000 students, Summerfest is an annual celebration that involves the entire city. It occurs the first weekend in August, beginning Friday afternoon and extending through the weekend.

Subcommittees plan the activities that are to take place. Art exhibits, photography contests, arts and crafts demonstrations, theater, special events, and adult activities — all are part of Summerfest. Events cover every type of cultural activity, along with a healthy dose of just plain fun. A business fair, sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce and featuring dozens of exhibits sponsored by local businesses, is held on the school hockey field in conjunction with Summerfest. The fun even includes a "mini-Olympics," with scheduled competitive activities in a variety of sports.

The festival costs the city "next to no money," Allen claims. Numerous local organizations sponsor events, and local musicians and theater groups volunteer their talents to provide entertainment activities. The talent is not just local, however. In past years, Summerfest has featured such big names as Up With People, Count Basie, and many others.

"Summerfest proved something to everyone in the community," Allen maintains. "We have some really creative people in this area. All we have to do is provide them with opportunities. People were excited because they were learning, and they were producing something worthwhile that everyone could share." That, says Allen, is what education is really all about: "to get people to use the things that they have learned to make the community better." What educators really want, Allen feels, is to help people to help themselves and, in turn, to help the educational community.

Tapping the talents of older citizens

Intergenerational programs have a special focus on ways senior citizens can be brought back into the educational community. As Jack Ossofshy, president of the National Council on Aging, points out, "We have only begun to tap the talents of older people. An obvious place to expand public awareness and use of these talents is in the local community."

School districts across the country are finding this to be unequivocally true. Consider the Roseville, Minn., school district where seniors interested in community service have formed a Golden K club, an affiliate of the Kiwanis for retired men. Others work with the Rotary to provide transportation for seniors unable to drive to the center. Local churches provide volunteer drivers to deliver meals to shut-ins. "Some of these house-bound seniors eventually start getting out and coming to the center as a result of the contact," says Klassen.

The interests of Roseville's older citizens go far beyond the ordinary. A program called Great Decision involves senior citizens in dialogue sessions with high school classes, exploring the political issues of our day. Klassen notes that the seniors have become a tremendous resource for the school system, volunteering for tutoring and other programs. "They have a tremendous amount of compassion, patience, and caring."

In Eureka, Mo., more than 300 older citizens participate in a unique senior citizens program for municipalities in the area. All types of activities are provided, including aerobics, arts and crafts, tours, shopping trips, health screening, and health education. Three municipalities help provide funding for the program, while the Rockwood school district furnishes the administrator and another municipality furnishes a meeting site.

County school buses are used every Tuesday for a senior transportation program in the Ankeny, Iowa, school district. The county funds the cost of gasoline and the driver, and a United Way center coordinates transportation requests from seniors. Elderly citizens call in advance to schedule rides for medical appointments, shopping, or other needs, and the buses run all day from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Noting that the buses have been filled to capacity on every run for the past two years, Koester says, "Public transportation is not available in Ankeny, so we're glad to be able to provide this service."

Comprehensive programs for everyone

The goal of a learning society focuses on lifelong learning with communities using their educational resources, family resources, and community resources to educate people of all ages at all stages of their lives.

Community school programs are not mere frills or added-on programs designed to win public support. They are, instead, the result of a community involvement process in which a plan is developed to provide opportunities for all ages in a variety of areas. For example, in Anchorage, Alaska, the community schools provide K-12 enrichment, building usage, community development, after-school activities for youth, evening activities for adults, and interagency cooperation for the community at large. In a city where community and social services are limited, it is the schools — specifically, the community schools — that deliver.

Let's look at how Eureka, Mo., and Yelm, Wash., put it all together.

Something for everyone in Eureka

"We want the people in the Rockwood School District to know they own the schools, and we want them to use the schools," says Vento, who is assistant superintendent for community education.

And use the schools they do. More than 50,000 citizens use school facilities each year for purposes that go far beyond the ordinary school day, according to Vento.

The Rockwood district provides a multitude of programs for everyone, from preschool-age youngsters to senior citizens, and actively encourages community use of school buildings for a variety of purposes, including scout meetings, public meetings, speakers' nights, and other community activities. A plethora of early childhood programs is available. Athletic programs like basketball, soccer, and wrestling are sponsored by the school district. Swimming classes also are provided, with both recreational and competitive swimming activities available. The Rockwood swim club, says Vento, serves 170 students and competes nationally. "We have one child who may go to the Olympics," he notes proudly.

An extensive adult education program meets a variety of needs. The program includes basic education classes for adults seeking their GED and a literacy program taught by volunteers for those who need to develop basic reading skills. A variety of enrichment classes also is offered, where local residents can learn to type, operate a computer, play bridge, do calligraphy, and develop their skills and knowledge in all sorts of areas.

An extension program brings courses from a nearby junior college into the local high school. "The idea here," says Vento, "is to make college courses more accessible to adults in the community." Rockwood's program makes 40 to 50 classes available each year. Most of these people use the facilities for free, although the school system charges a nominal fee for the use of the gym or pool, to pay the costs for heat, light, and custodial care.

Meeting everyone's needs in Yelm, Wash.

The learning society concept is thoroughly accepted in Yelm, Wash., where the goal of the community education program, according to Jenkins, is "meeting the needs of everyone." Yelm is a small town of 10,000 residents, but people come from all over to take part in the wide variety of activities and courses available through the Yelm school district. The program was established 20 years ago, Jenkins says. "Community education is very big here."

Programs range from basic literacy education to college degree programs and enrichment courses, and span the ages from preschool to senior citizens. Most of the funding comes from tuition fees for community education courses which are self-supporting. The school district provides a grant, and the remainder comes from businesses and organizations that cooperate to sponsor the programs. Scores of local nonprofit agencies and public institutions help to sponsor innovative educational opportunities for the people of Yelm.

In one such cooperative effort, the South Puget Sound Community College offers an Associate of Arts degree program through the Yelm community education department. The school district provides use of classroom facilities throughout the area, and salaries and other expenses are covered by the college. The program, which is open to anyone in the state, enables adults to attain the A.A. degree by attending classes two nights per week for three years.

The local department of parks and recreation offers courses at school facilities. Basketball, gymnastics, and other sports are among the many activities that are available to youngsters and adults in Yelm. There is no community swimming pool in Yelm, but every week a Yelm school bus takes a group of swimmers to a pool in a neighboring community.

A special tutoring program is sponsored jointly with a local mushroom farm. Employees are given one hour each week with pay to learn to read. The Yelm school district provides tutors to work at the site, teaching reading and basic education classes. "The program meets a special need," says Jenkins, "since the farm workers could not afford to miss time from work to take classes."

For young children, there is a preschool program called Care-A-Lot. Held in an elementary school and taught by a certified instructor, this instructional program helps three-, four- and five-year-olds to develop basic prereading skills and learn about science and nature. Part of the program, a prekindergarten health unit, is provided by the American Heart Association.

Children in Yelm don't have to be alone outside of school hours, thanks to a latchkey program that provides structured care between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. A certified instructor conducts the before- and after-school program at a local elementary school, where children from kindergarten through fifth grade can do homework, play, read, use the gymnasium, and participate in special projects like art and puppet theater.

An adult education program offers a wide variety of courses, ranging from GED preparation to college accredited classes. Basic education classes run four quarters per year. Sports activities, such as basketball, are also popular with adults, as are enrichment classes on such topics as computers, calligraphy, crocheting, aerobics, and first aid. Family togetherness is promoted with a weekly family movie night showing Walt Disney and other family movies for $1 per person.

Senior citizens form a vital part of Yelm's community education program. A special "Gold Card" is available free for any resident age 60 and over. The card enables seniors to take any course on a noncredit basis for only $2. All school programs and athletic events are open to Gold Card holders at no charge. Enrichment classes are especially popular with seniors, and they benefit from courses designed especially for them. One example is a course developed by the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) on "How To Be a Safe Driver Over 55."

"We have projects in every area," Jenkins maintains.

"We're working on an anti-drug campaign called 'We're Pushing Back.' We hold used clothing drives, and last year we sponsored a community Santa project that brought Christmas joy to more than 200 children." It's all part of meeting basic needs, according to Jenkins, who concludes, "Community education is for everyone."

Part II

How to set up effective programs

Start at the top

If community education/citizen involvement programs are to have any impact, there must be commitment from the community's leaders and, most of all, commitment from the schools. A firm commitment promises that citizen efforts will not be in vain, that there will be follow-through. As Shirley Bryant, director of community relations for the Birmingham, Mich., schools, puts it, "In order to establish community ownership, the school board and the administration must 'buy into' the concept and establish a policy that the community will be actively involved in the education process."

For community education to thrive, a program must be developed that addresses the needs of both the community and the schools. Schools cannot simply jump in head first, adopting a unique program here, an interesting partnership there. Assessment and planning must come first, so the schools understand what kind of program is called for in their particular circumstances. Assessment data are needed on the district and

the schools, as well as on the community, to determine the scope of what needs to be done.

Chapter three focuses on the strategies and leadership necessary to the success of any community education effort. Strategy five — *establish community involvement processes in educational planning and decision making* — addresses the principle that people who are involved in the planning and decision-making processes are more likely to support the resultant programs as well as the institutions administering them. Strategy six — *provide a responsive community-based support system for collective action among all educational and community agencies* — amplifies the need for broad-based support groups to address quality-of-life issues of all citizens.

This chapter will examine the first steps needed to establish a community education program, with emphasis on needs assessment and how needs assessments are conducted by school districts in Ankeny, Iowa; Salem, Ore.; and Maryland Heights, Mo.

Adopt a policy

For the board of education, this commitment can be manifested in policy statements establishing what's to be done and why. School board resolutions are public statements of support. A resolution passed by the school board in support of the community involvement effort through community education serves as an official endorsement of the planning, development, and implementation activities and gives them legitimacy and credibility with the educational staff as well as with the community.

Resolutions generally address:

- Reasons why the board supports community involvement.
- Needs of education and the community that might be met through community involvement.
- Potential benefits to both the schools and the community.
- Justification for schools supporting community development.
- Concluding statement(s) clearly defining what the board supports.

(A generic example of such a resolution can be found in the appendix.)

Appoint appropriate staff

Commitment also promises leadership, and that is vital to the success of any consolidated endeavor. Bryant says it is important to recognize that commitment won't occur without trained leadership. "A leader's job is to create a vehicle for it to happen," she notes.

Implementing community education efforts usually requires some changes in the traditional staffing pattern and organizational structure of a school system or individual school. Either new staff has to be hired or existing staff must be retrained.

Systemwide coordination is needed, as well as a coordinator at each site. The conventional title for the systemwide position is director of community education, with the site position designated as community school coordinator. The systemwide position has proven essential for all but the smallest school systems where the systemwide and building-level coordination is assumed by one person with the assistance of volunteers and part-time aides.

Ideally, the director of community education position is full time. However, it is common for it to be part time when the position is first created and then expanded as the program grows. In some school districts, the responsibilities for community education may be combined with other related functions, such as those of the communications/public relations administrator.

Whether the employment is full time or part time, it is important for the position to be filled by an individual who has the attitude and skills necessary to work successfully with the community. Because of the need for a variety of human relations, communications, and management skills and a flexible time schedule, many schools employ a trained community educator rather than assign existing staff to the position.

The duties of the director should be clearly defined (a sample job description can be found in the appendix). Everyone involved should be in agreement about how the community education effort fits in the overall organizational structure. The reporting channels should be clear: The director may report to the superintendent of schools, an assistant to the superintendent, the communications administrator, a consortium of community leaders, or some combination of these.

The position of community school coordinator is part of the administrative structure of a school. The role and duties of this position should be clearly defined, including how they relate to the mission of the school. The responsibilities of this position are similar to those of the director of community education, but on a scale geared to an individual school's community school program. The coordinator's duties are to assist and oversee the planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of the diverse activities that are part of the community school program, whether they are offered on the school site or at other appropriate community locations. The coordinator may report to the principal, the systemwide director of community education if one exists, a community school advisory group, or some combination of these.

Conduct needs assessment

A two-step assessment process is used to determine the goals and priorities of the community education program. The school district or school most often has the initial input in determining what is needed. It begins the process by developing a profile of the conditions and characteristics of the service area in

The needs assessment team

If a needs assessment instrument is being used, a decision must be made on whom to involve in answering the needs assessment questions. A team approach, such as that employed in Ankeny, Iowa, and the Pattonville schools in Maryland Heights, Mo., seems to work particularly well.

The assessment team should be composed of representatives of those groups and individuals who ultimately will be affected by the decisions. Involving all the community's educational partners — educators, students, parents, agency personnel, and representative community members — will provide data from various perspectives. The assessment team should meet as a group and discuss both the process and the questions to be asked. Each assessment question should be reviewed to ensure that team members understand both the question and the information needed to answer it.

The questions addressed in a needs assessment are designed to provide various types of information needed to develop a profile of the service area. Basically, the assessment team has to determine how public education can become a total community enterprise in their community. There are many ways this might be done; the case studies throughout this volume provide a sense both of the diversity possible and the commonality that often results.

The assessment team should not feel limited to recommending programs that are strictly "educational." For a variety of reasons, meeting the diverse educational needs of the community may require that the educational programs mesh with other human service areas, such as health, recreation, social development, cultural awareness, vocational training, and protection of the individual. The team might consider such diverse problems as economic development, substance abuse prevention, the needs of youth, and juvenile crime.

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terms of what it believes "should be" compared to what actually exists. In the second step, it gathers information to build an accurate profile of the area's characteristics and conditions as the total community perceives them, by using one of the following approaches: survey, key informant, community forum, and social indicators, described by George Warheit, R. A. Bell, and J. J. Schwab in their publication *Planning for Change*.

Not every district, of course, will opt for the same type of assessment, since these assessment methods vary greatly in complexity, information received, cost, comprehensiveness, ease of administration, and relative effectiveness. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and no single technique is clearly superior. For this reason, it is often best to use a combination. After examing each method in turn, we will look at one school district, in Maryland Heights, Mo., that does just that.

The survey approach

The survey approach provides for the collection of information from a sample of the entire population of the community. The survey approach provides results that are the most scientifically valid; it is the approach most capable of eliciting specific information from individuals. Its weaknesses are that it tends to be relatively expensive and requires a knowledge of research procedures and statistical analysis. The validity and reliability of the data may be significantly affected by non-response and non-return rates.

Assessment of community needs is the responsibility of everyone in Ankeny, Iowa, according to Kevin Koester, director of community education. The process begins with a random survey of households in the Ankeny district. First held after the 1980 national census, the survey takes place every five years. Volunteer field workers carry the survey forms, with a cover letter from the mayor and the superintendent of schools, to homes that have been selected randomly through a computer process. Appointments are scheduled for the volunteers to return and pick up the completed forms.

Field testing of the survey instrument found average completion time to be 25 minutes; however, despite the length of the survey, participation rates have been excellent. "We do a publicity campaign in advance, promoting completion of the survey," Koester explains, "and we get support from several other agencies. Our returns have run about 78 percent, an impressive return rate for a survey of this type."

The survey helps to identify the needs of the community as seen by the people. Assessment of these needs, development of priorities, and formulation of a plan of action are included in the next part of the process. These functions take place at comprehensive needs assessment conferences that are held twice during every five-year planning period.

Block houses are yet another information-gathering technique. Organized by school neighborhoods, this process has people periodically collecting their neighbors' opinions on a variety of issues and reporting the results to the school district.

The effective questionnaire

When an assessment approach is used that will elicit direct citizen input, attention must be given to development of the interview questions or questionnaire. The following guidelines, adapted from Phillip A. Clark's *Trainers Handbook for Citizen Council Training*, will aid in constructing an effective questionnaire:

- Is the title and purpose of the survey clear, concise, and easily understood?
- Are the instructions for completing the survey clear and concise?
- Is the personal information requested only that which is actually needed? Can it be easily provided?
- Is the survey as brief as possible with items uncrowded?
- Are questions arranged in sequence from least to most difficult?
- Do the questions engage attention and interest?
- Are there any questions that might embarrass the respondents?
- Are there any questions that might encourage guessing?
- Are all questions of such a nature that to answer requires only a minimum amount of work by the respondent?
- Are all questions clear and concise and composed of simple and familiar words?
- Can the answers be easily and readily tabulated?

- Do any questions suggest answers or include catchwords, stereotypes, or words with emotional connotations?
- Do the choices for answering allow for all possible responses and is the space adequate for answering, especially if open-ended questions are used?
- Has the questionnaire been given a pretest or pilot study and revised appropriately?
- Have the persons administering the survey been prepared and trained properly for their responsibilities?
- Has the questionnaire been carefully reviewed and approved by the appropriate educational authority?

(For detailed needs assessment questions that are geared to each of the community education strategies discussed in the introduction, see the appendix.)

The key informant approach

In this approach, assessment is based on information secured from those persons in the community who are in a position to best know the community, its people, their needs, and the patterns of services being received. The strengths of this approach are that it is simple and inexpensive and the data collection instruments are relatively easy to construct. It also encourages a broad-based discussion of community conditions and can be used to establish or strengthen communications and goodwill among community agencies. Its weaknesses are that the data is statistically unreliable and may contain built-in biases resulting from individual or organizational perspectives.

The Salem-Keizer school district in Salem, Ore., has found a system of "key communicators" to be quite reliable. "We identify folks throughout the community who want to be involved," says Skip Liebertz, executive assistant to the superintendent. "We sit down with them regularly to keep them up-to-date on what's going on, and we encourage them to collect rumors and keep us informed of what the community is thinking." A school system hotline provides the key communicators with quick feedback on significant issues.

"Our citizen involvement strategies have helped us to make significant differences," Liebertz says. "We've made tough budget decisions by involving citizen advisory committees to get feedback about where cuts should be made, and designed programs using input from the citizens most involved."

Community involvement strategies were used to assess the school system after *A Nation At Risk* was released, Liebertz recalls. "Our board members wanted to know how we stacked up," he says. "So we created a special task force of community leaders and business people to evaluate the school system critically. They made 52 recommendations for changes, 47 of which already have been implemented."

Public opinion balloting is another important strategy in Salem. "This enables us to frame specific questions about an issue that the board needs to deal with and do scientific random sampling to get a sense of where the community stands on the issue," Liebertz explains. Such surveys may use an outside firm or district staff members, he says, and are used for budget questions and major decisions, such as whether to initiate kindergartens or establish an extended-care program.

In one survey, Salem residents were asked a hypothetical question: If part of the school budget had to be cut, what programs did they feel were the least important? Another time citizens were asked if they supported sex education in the schools, and what their concerns would be if a sex-education program were implemented in Salem. Surveys also have included questions about how community members rate the quality of the schools' programs, and where the schools need to improve.

The community forum approach

Town hall meetings are another essential means of gathering information in the Salem-Keizer schools, particularly when time is short. "When an important decision needs to made, it's important to go face to face," says Liebertz. "This is the preferred strategy at budget time, for instance."

Such meetings exemplify the community forum approach, in which the assessment is based on information received from community residents invited to attend a public hearing or series of public meetings. The strengths of this approach are that it is relatively easy to arrange, inexpensive to conduct, and provides an opportunity for input from many sources. It also may be used to identify community-minded citizens and to bring new areas or undefined needs to attention. Its weaknesses are that it presents possible logistical problems for large communities in terms of the number and convenience of sites, and there is no assurance of representative attendance. There also is the potential for a meeting to be dominated by one or more outspoken participants and to create heightened expectations for quick solutions.

The social indicators approach

Assessment in the social indicators approach is based on inferences drawn from descriptive statistics found in public records and reports. This approach differs from the other three in that it uses secondary, non-attitudinal data instead of eliciting direct community participation in the assessment process. Its strengths are that assessment can be accomplished in a short period of time and can provide non-attitudinal data. It is a good use of existing statistical data. It also is a good way to compare different geographic or political units, such as city versus county. Its weaknesses are that it is not a direct assessment of community conditions and opinions, and it may use data that is invalid or out-of-date.

A combination approach

The four assessment approaches are not mutually exclusive. They can be used in combination or independently, depending on the types of information needed, the extent of direct citizen involvement desired, and the constraints of time and resources.

The Pattonville School District of Maryland Heights, Mo., does combine assessment processes. Surveys are conducted in a number of different ways, but key informants also are part of the process. Attitudes on the specific issues are determined through brief telephone surveys conducted by these informants who, like in Salem-Keizer school district and many others, are called key communicators. "We call them key communicators

Ankeny's needs assessment survey

Four hundred randomly selected households in the Ankeny, Iowa, school district are surveyed every five years, the first step in the district's community involvement strategy. The survey instrument includes sections developed by various community organizations; thus it is referred to as a Community Benefit Survey. Sponsoring agencies include the city of Ankeny, the school district, the Community Education Advisory Council, chamber of commerce, Kirkendall Library, parks and recreation department, United Way, and the Lakeland Family YMCA.

Among the questions specifically related to the school district are:

1. How long have you lived in the Ankeny community?
2. How long do you anticipate living in this community?
3. From which source do you best receive community information? (Choices listed include the various news media and a blank to fill in for "other.")
4. Has anyone in your household ever attended an Adult Education class in Ankeny?
5. Has anyone in your household belonged to a local civic or community organization?

because we try to keep this group of volunteers especially well-informed," says Bob Guttmann, director of community relations. "We count on them not only to make calls, but to report on the concerns of people in the community and to help dispel rumors that develop."

Surveys are conducted 6 times each year, and the volunteers are committed to make 20 phone calls each time. The volunteers are given a list of 30 names to call, along with a set of 2 to 5 questions. The calls are made from home, at the convenience of the volunteer communicators. The issues surveyed are

6. Which weekday evening is best for you to attend classes, programs, or activities?
7. Would you favor an after school or evening "enrichment classes" curriculum (academic, business, industrial arts, hobby offerings, etc.) to be offered to high schoolers on a non-credit basis?
8. Would you favor an after school or evening "enrichment classes" curriculum (academic, business, industrial arts, hobby offerings, etc.) to be offered junior high school students?
9. Would you favor an after school "enrichment classes" curriculum to be offered to grades 4-6?
10. Would you pay a reasonable rate to send your youngster(s), ages 5-12, to after-school child care
11. Are you a registered voter?
12. Do you know that school facilities are generally available at no charge for local community service needs?
13. Are you aware that the Ankeny Community Education Advisory Council exists to address total community needs?
14. Do you support a grades 9-12 high school by 1988 if tax dollars are saved?
15. Do you have comments about costs or availability of the school facilities in Ankeny?
16. Do you have any comments about school curriculum, student discipline, or the quality of education in Ankeny?

determined by department heads, the school board, or the superintendent, and specific survey results are returned to the administrator or committee that initiated the request for information.

A broad spectrum of topics is covered by the surveys. Families who are new to the district are welcomed and polled routinely regarding their needs and concerns; students who have graduated are asked for input on what was good about the system when they were in school and what additions or changes they feel should be made; and proposed programs — ranging from family life and sex education to new computer courses and extended-day kindergarten — are the subject of surveys to help predict community reactions and assess needs.

Persons to be polled are chosen randomly via a computer. Certain criteria may be selected, depending on the nature of the survey. Thus, topics relating only to parents of preschoolers can be discussed only with those individuals, while questions about a bond issue or a community auditorium can be directed to persons on the list of registered voters.

Each month, the key communicators meet with the superintendent in an informal session that includes refreshments or a light supper. They are given an update on what is happening in the district, Guttmann says, and have the opportunity to share concerns that they have picked up on — "things people have said other than what is written on the survey forms." After the update and an opportunity to ask questions, the results of the survey of the previous month are summarized and discussed, and the questions for the next survey are reviewed.

"These sessions are always very candid," notes Guttmann, "and the volunteers know that they can ask anything." As a result, he says, "These people are able to be a great help because they grasp the total picture. Some have been with us for years. These surveys have provided the district with a great deal of input from the community." Guttman notes that, typically, the technique allows the district to survey about 600 homes each month. The Pattonville district serves about 18,700 homes and a population of about 50,000 people.

Some suggestions generated by these surveys that the district has implemented include the transformation from a junior high to a middle school program, and a wellness program for students and staff members that includes anti-smoking and drug prevention campaigns.

Another information-gathering technique used in the Pattonville schools is a five-year needs assessment plan. "What we did," says Guttmann, "was bring in groups of people to fill out more detailed surveys." These surveys were completed in the district office or other centers, and a number of times were offered as options so respondents could select a time and place convenient for them. "We sent out individual invitations to the chosen participants, emphasizing how they had been randomly selected and how we needed their participation in order to get good results."

As a result, Guttman says, the response to the survey was excellent. "When you send something home with the children or send it through the mail, it's too easy just to put it aside. Bringing participants into centers made them feel important and gave us the opportunity to answer their questions about the survey. We made sure they knew that the survey was intended to bring about change and would be used for planning and developing the future of education for the kids of the community."

Pattonville's 5-year plan was a four-step process that involved needs assessment, development, implementation, and evaluation. "We worked with different groups," Guttmann notes, "including teachers, classified staff, community members, and students. Input was sought from various committees, and the results were computerized to help determine the general consensus."

The first 5-year plan, completed in 1985, brought about a great number of changes in the Pattonville School District. "We instituted the middle school concept and established several alternative schools, including a traditional K-8 school," Guttman says. An innovative dropout prevention program was developed for the high school. Other changes resulting from the 5-year plan included the establishment of a preschool program, a partnership with McDonnell Douglas, an adolescent parenting program for teens who have babies, and a computer education program.

As Katherine Keough pointed out in *Scenario 200: Intercepting the Future*, public schools are no longer solely the concern of school children and professional educators. They belong to the entire community and should serve that community. Planning and needs assessment are vital to understanding what the community needs.

Involve everyone

As strategies five and six imply, the more people who are involved in community education's planning and programs, the more successful those programs will be. The positive side of increased involvement by many is a sense of community cohesion. Participants are more likely than non-participants to:

- Accept the legitimacy of the interests of the various groups in the community.
- Understand the reasons for reconciling differences.
- Recognize the value of compromise.
- Actively support the decisions.

There are other advantages. With broad-based involve-

Strategy V: Establish community involvement processes in educational planning and decision making.

Strategy VI: Provide a responsive community-based support system for collective action among all educational and community agencies to address both current quality-of-life issues of all citizens and special needs.

ment, special interests tend to balance out, and policy development tends to be based on adequate, accurate information rather than to reflect any one group's biases or misconceptions. Policies are more likely to be adopted on the basis of logical evidence and to be consistent with other community policies. The community, if involved, will rally when need calls for it.

Schools must take care, however, not to make only token efforts at increasing community involvement. This can occur when administrators or boards are reluctant to share decision making for fear of being perceived as weak or ineffective. In addition, schools may shy away from involvement activities because community participation in decision making increases the possibility of conflict or raises unrealistic expectations. Power struggles can occur when a lot of people share information and power; some people worry that it will dilute centralized power, and that is not always comfortable for them.

In today's litigious society, failure to broaden the base of involvement may have effects more far-reaching than mere loss of support. Individuals and groups tend to resort to court action and judicial decisions when they are denied adequate means to express their views. The best way for school administrators to avoid such conflicts was outlined by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration in its 1987 report *Leaders for America's Schools*: "They must exercise the wisest kind of political behavior by resolving the conflicting demands of many constituents and, in turn, gain their support for education." In short, get everyone involved.

There are many ways to do this. Community involvement often is manifested in advisory councils, booster clubs, parent resource groups, and coalitions of municipal agencies. This chapter will examine how to establish each of these community involvement strategies by looking at success stories from school districts across the country. Finally, we'll take a brief look at the other side of the involvement coin, at the benefits of having educators reach out and become involved outside the school proper, particularly in the home.

Advisory groups facilitate involvement

The use of advisory groups is the most common vehicle for securing community involvement in educational planning and decision making. These groups may be called committees, councils, task forces, or special-issue study groups. In Brockton, Mass., the citizen advisory committees oversee the budget, operations — everything, according to Harry Allen, former assistant to the superintendent. Their minutes are public record, and their recommendations become policy — as accepted by the school board.

Basically, there are three types of advisory groups. The first type of advisory committee functions under the direction of the superintendent and reports to the school board. The second type, the system-level committee, functions under the direction of staff and has various reporting channels. The third type is the building-level advisory committee. As we look at how advisory groups are used in Birmingham, Mich.; Brockton, Mass.; and St. Louis Park, Minn., we will see that often a combination is employed.

Although some citizen advisory groups are elected, it is more common in education to appoint individuals or have them volunteer. Some groups have both volunteer and appointed members, especially when people are appointed to ensure that the committee is representative of the community. Including key members of the community, especially community leaders, is a crucial step.

Birmingham citizens "own" the schools

In Birmingham, Mich., a unique system of districtwide advisory committees allows community ownership of the schools to become a reality. A 60-member interagency advisory council meets every month to talk about community issues, share resources and problems, and discuss ways that the various agencies need to work together.

Every neighborhood school in Birmingham has an advisory committee that meets once each month. Composed of parents, non-parents, representatives from local businesses, and senior citizens, the purpose of these councils is to advise the principals on community issues affecting the elementary schools. Six members of each school committee serve as the executive board of the Birmingham community school program, which advises the school board on all school-related matters.

"Community education means more than just providing programs," says Shirley Bryant, director of community relations. "Community education is the philosophy that the community and the educational system should work as a team, each serving as a resource to the other."

The resulting cooperation has brought about many changes, according to Bryant. "What we have done is break down the walls between the educational system and the community." Neighborhood advisory committees have established partnerships with businesses and created childcare networks using school system resources. "We've developed ways to use cable TV more effectively, brought community resources into the K-12 classrooms, and shared information and educational techniques with the business community.

Winning the budget battle in Brockton

When the town of Brockton, Mass., was hit with a major piece of tax-cutting legislation, athletics, the arts, and community education all faced major cutbacks. So the school system turned to its most important resource — the community — for help. Brockton residents enjoyed cultural events, afterschool programs for latchkey children, and adult activities. Something for every age level was available through the school system, and no one wanted to lose it. So the people of Brockton joined to save their programs — and won.

To accomplish this, volunteer citizen advisory councils were established for the city and for every neighborhood school. The purpose of these advisory councils was to provide input and direction to the superintendent of schools regarding cost containment and budget cuts. What followed was, in the words of Harry Allen, "a tremendous amount of work." The council gathered information, researched such things as the cost of electricity and food services, and explored ways the school system could save money.

Policy statement is useful

The school board that has adopted a resolution supporting community involvement efforts may also develop a policy statement defining the board's position on citizen involvement in educational planning and decision making. For example:

The board must be in contact with the community constantly and must transmit the concern of the community to the school professional staff. To this end:

- The board assumes leadership in any plan to involve citizens at the local level in educational planning.
- Community involvement should be regarded as a process rather than merely a matter of arrangements. Adequate safeguards must be included, however, to ensure a means by which concerns may be expressed by citizens at a level lower than the school board.
- In planning for community involvement, community organizations, teachers, city government representatives, students, parents, and any other concerned group must be brought into the discussion and decision-making process.
- The board shall spell out clearly defined goals and carefully delineated powers for local groups.
- Local involvement must ensure that due process will be observed in making changes and that capricious and arbitrary actions will be avoided.

Advisory groups are used at several levels in the edcational planning and decision-making process. The size of the school district usually determines the levels of involvement and the number of advisory groups established. Generic policy statements related to advisory committees at three levels can be found in the appendix.

"The superintendent was an embattled man," Allen recalls. "Budget cuts in education are never popular, and he was beset by groups lobbying for their own interests." But after the establishment of the advisory councils, the superintendent had support, Allen says. "People knew their voice would be heard, and they knew we would have to work together. Each of the different neighborhood councils was represented on the city advisory council, and those representatives were able to bring other viewpoints back to their own councils. As a result, there was widespread support for each of the recommendations made.

"We adopted an honest approach and pledged to run the city's educational programs at minimal expense, while taking steps to generate some revenue to turn back to the city," says Allen. As a result, "Brockton public schools shaved some things, but not one program was eliminated." What is more, when the first year was completed, Brockton had $100,000 in the bank to begin the next year.

How did they do it? "In the past, community education was a non-profit operation. We found that people did not mind paying a small fee if it meant keeping the program. And because citizens were involved in the decision, everyone accepted it," Allen notes.

The city advisory council members were selected by recommendation to the school board and included a broad cross-section of the community. Every neighborhood advisory council and recreation department was represented, and members-at-large represented the business community and local government. Parents and educators were included, as were individuals with no immediate involvement with the school system.

"Getting people involved in the needs of the school system helped them to see the problems as their own," Allen says. As a result, partnerships were established to share community and business resources with the schools, and donations poured in — although fund raising was not one of the aims of the advisory committees.

"Their function was to offer input to aid policy making and decision making but, once people realized what was required to operate the city's educational programs, there was just no stopping them," he notes, adding, "Those at the neighborhood level worked especially hard, but everyone found it rewarding."

Decision making in St. Louis Park

Every school in St. Louis Park, Minn., has either a parent advisory council, made up of parents, or a site management group, says Superintendent Carl Holmstrom. The site management council, a new concept in St. Louis Park, was developed under a foundation grant and involves not only parents but teachers, business and community leaders, and local residents.

"We let them make a lot of decisions," says Holmstrom, adding that "as long as they stay within the bounds of local law and school board policy, they can make decisions that are to their benefit." For example, Holmstrom explains, instead of returning unexpended funds to the district at the end of the school year, the site management group voted to carry over such funds for the following year. The district agreed to split any leftover funds 50/50 with the school, if the savings were the result of a decision by the site management council that saved the school district money.

"We believe strongly in empowerment," says Holmstrom. "Ultimately, we want to involve people in the school system and decentralize the decision-making process."

The school board relies heavily on input from the councils. "We call them stake-holders," Holmstrom notes, "because they have a stake in how we operate the school system." Individual citizen advisory councils exist for every community program in operation: the senior center, the preschool, the latchkey program. St. Louis Park is moving into formulating advisory councils for extracurricular programs such as athletics, band, and orchestra. "We want to give parents and the community the opportunity to tell us whether they think we are running these programs in an acceptable fashion," Holmstrom explains.

The school district also employs an umbrella advisory council that consists of the city manager, a school board member, a city council member, and three citizens-at-large. Meeting monthly, this advisory council oversees the operation of the school system, reviews the budgets of the various community education programs, and makes recommendations to the board regarding funding.

"One of the greatest attributes of the St. Louis Park school system is the way the city and the school district work together," notes Holmstrom. "We have an excellent working relationship with the city, and we are represented on all the city's major commissions, such as planning, human rights, and parks."

Advisory committee guidelines

For committees to operate as smoothly as they do in St. Louis Park, Minn., some type of operational structure is necessary. Districts will differ in the amount of power such committees will be allowed to wield, and consideration must be given to the specific role of each group and the limits of the group's powers and responsibilities.

If a citizens group is to be ongoing, decisions must be made defining the general areas of study or problem solving, the scope of responsibility, the accountability and reporting procedures, the general policies and procedures by which the group will operate, and the length of service. Consideration also should be given to changing the membership in a way that allows continuity in the group's efforts but provides new involvement and leadership opportunities.

Following are some recommendations for keeping a committee functioning on an ongoing basis and citizens feeling good about their involvement:

- Clearly state the functions of the committee in writing, including the limits of its responsibilities and powers.

- Indicate the committee's authorizing body and the type(s) of support it will receive.

- Be sure the committee membership is representative of the clients being served.

- Determine the specific time period of membership and state it in writing.

- Provide the committee with orientation training and useful information about the school system and/or individual school.

- Select regular meeting times, places, and days of the week; do not operate on an as-needed basis.
- Have a committee member serve as chair, and avoid having a staff member assume control.
- Develop an agenda by consulting others, and mail the agenda to committee members before the meetings.
- When the committee responsibilities are large and multifaceted, develop subcommittees to focus on specific tasks or areas.
- Take minutes at meetings and mail them to committee members as soon as possible after the meetings.
- Take action on the recommendations and products of the committee, and keep committee members informed on outcomes. In cases where the committee's recommendations are not followed, inform committee members of the reasons why.

When adopting involvement strategies, care should be given to facilitating ethnic and minority participation by addressing language difficulties, unfamiliarity with the process, incompatible working hours, and economic pressures.

Consideration also should be given to factors that encourage the participation by members of the community not likely to be directly affected by the decisions and/or programs. These people generally are perceived as "neutral," and their participation in the planning and decision-making process can help to moderate tensions and coordinate efforts.

The school board appoints parents or residents to serve as representatives to the city, and they serve a three-year appointment for no more than two terms. Holmstrom meets monthly with the city manager in an informal setting to discuss potential problems and resolve differences. The relationship, he says, has been good for the school system and the city.

Only 20 percent of the taxpayers in St. Louis Park have children enrolled in the public schools. Yet thanks to community involvement, there is broad-based support for the needs of the school system. "Our referendum to increase taxes for education always passes," Holmstrom says. "There is no question that this involvement improves the quality of education here."

Salem-Keizer is sold on involvement

Various levels of citizen advisory committees are the key in the Salem-Keizer school district in Salem, Ore. In fact, 30 different strategies for involving citizens in the decision-making process are used in the Salem-Keizer school system. "We designed these strategies after several years of talking with the school board on different ways to involve citizens in the educational process," says Skip Liebertz, executive assistant to the superintendent. "We wanted to provide our principals and our school board with lots of options for decision making."

The different ways of involving the community are helpful, Liebertz says, because it provides alternatives for involving citizens in the planning and decision-making processes. The strategy chosen depends on how much time is available and how much information is desired.

The system in the Salem-Keizer district is based on a structure of comprehensive citizen advisory committees. The school board has a system of advisory committees throughout the district, and each building and major program has its own citizen advisory committee representing the people served.

Booster clubs are a natural

The traditional high school booster clubs are very viable organizations that raise considerable sums of money to support primarily music and athletic programs. Motivation to join such organizations is strongest among those individuals who either are parents of participating students or have a particular

87

interest in the sponsored activities. This same type of organization can just as easily be used to support the school overall, drawing on a much wider range of potential members.

Cheering on academic excellence

"Academic Boosters" is "one of the most wonderful things that has ever happened to this community," according to Pam Bailey, school-community relations coordinator for the Mercer County schools in Princeton, W.Va. A three-year-old community organization to promote academic excellence, the program was developed by parents who were interested in finding ways to influence academic achievement.

The Academic Boosters Club is a nonprofit organization with members from all parts of the community, an area that comprises two cities and five outlying rural areas. Its board of directors consists of 24 members drawn from the schools, local businesses, and the community, with no more than one-third drawn from the school administration and teaching staff. An active membership committee recruits new members year-round, and dues ranging from $5 (for educators) to $50 (for larger businesses) are charged to cover expenses of the program.

The boosters, explains Bailey, have three goals:

1. To recognize excellence for academic achievement by students.

2. To acknowledge outstanding accomplishments by teachers and other educators.

3. To support activities that promote academics.

To accomplish these goals, the boosters send personal letters to students and faculty; award certificates, pins, medals, and plaques for varying levels of achievement; offer financial assistance to student achievers who are unable to pay for testing or scholarship applications; and sponsor an annual awards dinner to honor valedictorians, salutatorians, merit scholars, influential teachers, and others who have achieved academic excellence.

Based on the premise that students perform better if academic excellence is considered acceptable to them, the boosters encourage students to be proud of their scholastic achievements. The program has been so successful that the entire community helps to raise money and develop programs to encourage academic achievement. "This is an economically depressed area," Bailey notes, "but the community really pushes education."

Numerous businesses have gotten involved. A local bank donates savings bonds to all scholarship recipients. Another bank funds the publication of an *Academic Awards Annual*. The daily newspaper sponsors a standing Sunday column written by teachers in order to increase the visibility and credibility of the school system, and provides full-page advertisements periodically to honor teachers who deserve recognition. Local restaurants offer free lunch certificates to teachers whose performance is judged to be beyond the call of duty.

The Academic Boosters also has sponsored educational forums, held a reception for the visiting state superintendent of schools, and sent representatives to speak at area club meetings. The organization encourages past graduates who have made significant contributions to their communities or professions to serve as role models for students.

The first organization of its kind in the state, the Academic Boosters Club has grown tremendously, and it has made an impact. The state superintendent of schools, in published goals for 1990, has asked that every school in the state establish a similar organization. The best testimonials, however, according to Bailey, come from the students themselves. "Students here feel good about excelling," she says. "Thanks to the efforts of the parents and the community, they're not afraid to put academic achievement first."

PTAs involve parents, community members

"The PTA's central purpose for over 90 years has been getting parents involved in their children's education," says Shirley Cupery, secretary of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, better known as the National PTA. "It is harder for parents to get involved in education today," she says, noting that most families now include two working parents who are more involved with the mechanics of just keeping the family going. "Therefore, we remind PTAs all over the country that parents with limited time and energy aren't going to give that time and energy to PTAs unless PTAs are involved in things that really matter."

National PTA asks local area PTAs to conduct surveys in their communities to find out the key topics that parents are interested in, and then to offer a variety of programs on those topics. PTAs also are starting to break volunteer duties into small chunks — sometimes as little as two hours per year — so that all parents can help out without feeling overwhelmed.

PTAs and PTOs try to involve parents in their children's education in three ways: as participants in their children's education, as school volunteers and supporters, and as participants in decision making. To help parents participate in their children's education, some PTAs give parents handouts and teach them how to help their children do better in school by using such methods as reading aloud to them and talking to teachers to reinforce at home what's happening at school. Other PTA-sponsored programs in this area include child discipline, critical thinking, and family reading months during which parents and children sign contracts to read a certain number of books together.

Programs that involve parents as school volunteers and supporters are coordinated with school principals and include training for volunteers. "Research shows that achievement levels can go up in schools with active volunteer programs," said Cupery. An example of this type of program is "Teacher Appreciation Week," during which parents show their support by leaving flowers or doughnuts in faculty lounges or apples on each teacher's desk.

PTAs and PTOs involve parents in decision making by asking for their input in such areas as setting and evaluating school goals, revising report cards, and devising budget guidelines and homework policies. Some PTAs work with school boards and parents to form parent advisory committees.

In areas with large numbers of ethnic groups, National PTA gives grants for programs that encourage minority parents' participation in their children's education. In Dade County, Fla., English/Spanish programs are aired over a local cable television station to help parents become involved. In Los Angeles, Calif., brochures are distributed to Asian parents in their native language. And in San Diego, Calif., PTA members go into the Spanish, Asian, and black communities to survey parents about their wants and needs.

A Rural Task Force has been created for reaching parents

Professional staff involvement pays off

Studies on teacher and administrator involvement with parents have documented that:

- **Teachers change their perceptions of the abilities of children whose parents are involved in the schools. (R. Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, 1968.)**
- **When a teacher exhibits greater respect than other teachers for a child's family, that child's readiness to gain from educational experiences in the classroom is enhanced. (E. K. Beller, *Critical Issues in Research Related to Disadvantaged Children*, 1969.)**
- **Children in compensatory education programs seem to do better in some cases because of improved self-image; in other cases, improvement is due to program adaptations brought about by the parental perspectives influencing decisions. (Miriam Stearns, et al., *Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education*, 1973.)**
- **Children's achievement is enhanced when parents are involved, whatever the reason. (Anne Henderson, *Parent Participation-Student Achievement: The Evidence Grows*, 1981.)**
- **Children have an advantage in school when their parents support and encourage their school activities. (Joyce L. Epstein, "What Principals Should Know About Parent Involvement," *Principal*, 1987.)**

in rural areas. "Every child needs parental support," says Cupery. "It doesn't matter if he's black, Hispanic, or in a school of 60 children in the middle of nowhere."

Some PTAs are leaving the school setting, holding meetings in civic centers or in small, informal groups of 10 to 15 parents in willing parents' homes. "Some parents are unsure how to meet with teachers and feel threatened by schools," says Cupery, noting that in the past parents usually were not asked to come into their children's schools unless their children did something wrong.

PTA involvement is not limited to parents. PTAs urge all community members to become involved as volunteers and in decision making. "Only about 25 percent of U.S. families have children in school, so we must reach beyond the parent body to the larger community," says Cupery. PTAs accomplish this in many ways, including holding open houses to invite the community into the schools to see for themselves what the schools are doing. Some PTAs give older citizens free passes to school plays, band and choir concerts, and other activities.

PTAs are working hard to make themselves more visible to the outside community. National PTA sponsors a competition called Reflections, which awards children for achievement in art, photography, music, and other areas. Starting at the local level, area, and then state winners progress to a national competition. For maximum exposure, some PTAs display children's artwork and photographs in shopping malls, which often provide an area for school bands and choirs to hold concerts. In some communities, local McDonald's restaurants print PTA information and schedules on placemats.

"These programs help change the community's perception of what's really going on in the schools," says Cupery. "They combine to make the schools less threatening and more inviting in the eyes of parents and members of the community."

Focus on parent resource groups

Frequently it is assumed that involvement efforts must focus outside the immediate school community, the implication being that parents already are involved. This is not always so, and schools should not overlook their primary resource — parents — as they work diligently toward generating partnerships with others in the community.

Depending on the climate toward education in a particular community, the schools may need to exert special effort to ensure the involvement of all parents. School districts in Mercer County, W.Va., and Loveland, Colo., have done just that.

Family/school involvement

There is no blueprint for the school that collaborates effectively with parents. But all schools that work well with parents share a fundamental set of principles. These are listed below, along with suggestions for implementing them.

1. **Every aspect of the school climate is open, helpful, and friendly.**

   Examples:

   - A "Parents and Visitors Are Welcome" sign is posted on the front door.
   - A parent lounge is in the building, with comfortable chairs, a desk and telephone, and books and magazines about child development and education.
   - Tours and orientations are provided for new families.
   - A monthly parent/teacher lunch is held in the school cafeteria.

2. **Communications with parents are frequent, clear, and two-way.**

   Examples:

   - An attractive wall calendar is printed each school year and distributed to every family. The calendar includes information about the school calendar and holidays, inservice days, and special events.
   - An open house is held before the beginning of the school year and occasional back-to-school nights are scheduled as well. These give parents an opportunity to learn about the school program and meet school staff.

- Students may bring home a weekly folder, enclosing all their marked papers for the week and a comment/question sheet that must be signed by the parents and returned to school.
- Teachers send their course curricula home to parents, outlining expectations about homework and classroom behavior.
- High school homeroom teachers (or guidance counselors) call each student's parents in the first few months of the year to review progress. An option for a conference is offered.

3. **Parents are treated as collaborators in the educational process, with a strong role to play in their children's learning and behavior.**

Examples:

- Learning contracts are developed for each student, spelling out an agreement about individualized goals and tasks. It is signed annually by the parents, teachers, and students.
- Warning notes are sent home as soon as a student is in danger of failing a marking period.
- Teachers routinely call home when a child seems withdrawn or troubled at school.
- Parents of disruptive students are asked to come to school for a couple of days to observe.
- Schools use volunteers and a phone roster to notify parents when their children are absent without an excuse. After two such absences, parents are required to accompany their children to school the next day and talk with a designated administrator or counselor.

4. **Parents are encouraged to comment, both formally and informally, on school policies and to share in some decision making.**

Examples:

- A policy handbook is published and a copy given to each family and student. Opportunities for questions and comments are included in a tear-off sheet and encouraged at school meetings.
- A school site council meets several times a year to decide how to use the school's discretionary funds.
- Broadly representative parent advisory groups are established to develop codes on such concerns as smoking, drinking, or drugs.

5. **The school recognizes its responsibility to forge a partnership with all families in the school, not just those most easily available. This includes parents who work outside the home, divorced parents without custody, and families of minority race and language.**

Examples:

- The school principal ensures that employed parents receive advance warning of special daytime events and are offered time to meet with teachers outside regular class hours.
- Schools in a community with a sudden swell in its immigrant population hire bilingual community outreach staff to make home visits, speak at churches, and listen to parents' concerns.
- Noncustodial parents are asked if they wish to be included on the school mailing list, receive copies of report cards, and be invited to parent/teacher conferences.

6. **The principal and other school administrators actively express and promote the philosophy of partnership with all families.**

Examples:

- The principal fills in for teachers who are meet

ing with parents, hires substitute teachers for conference days, and expects teachers to meet with parents before or after school, or in the evening when necessary.
- An annual banquet is held to honor the school's parent advisory groups, and the principal presents awards for special accomplishments.
- The principal facilitates the parent organization, contacting students to provide babysitting for younger children at all elementary school events.

7. **The school encourages volunteer participation from parents and the community.**

Examples:

- Each parent is expected to volunteer some time, skills, advice, or resources (money, equipment, supplies), whether during the day, in the evenings, or on weekends. A wide-ranging list of such volunteer opportunities is sent to each family in the fall so they can choose how to participate.
- A parent talent bank is created to provide supplementary art, music, math, and computer instruction during and after school.
- A parent group organizes an information and referral service for parents who need after-school childcare. Parents also operate a telephone service to reach parents who might provide rides for field trips, find materials for a study project, or help immigrant families adjust to the community and school.

— Based on ideas from *Beyond the Bake Sale*, by Anne T. Henderson, Carol L. Marburger, and Theodora Ooms; a publication of the National Committee for Citizens in Education, Columbia, Md.

Reaching out for the uninvolved parent

"When HOME WORKS, School Works" is the message of a unique project put together by teachers from the Chapter 1 program in Mercer County, W.Va. Designed to reach uninvolved parents, the project grew out of concerns that developed after the release of *A Nation At Risk*.

"That report," notes Bailey, "identified basic skills, discipline, and parent involvement as critical needs for educational achievement. Basic skills and discipline already were being dealt with in Mercer County, so we made increasing parental involvement a priority."

To accomplish this, a weeklong summer workshop was held for teachers and parents to develop a communication program to encourage parents to be active participants in the education of their children. "We felt that you have to educate the parent along with the child to break the cycle of the slow learner," says Bailey. "We wanted parents involved in the planning because we believed it was important for people to buy into the project. We also wanted something that the students would be excited about because we knew that, unless students were excited, we'd never get the parents interested."

Students are an integral part of the HOME WORKS communication network. "We let them know they are important to ensure that things that are sent home get there," Bailey notes. The two most important goals of the project, she adds, are to get parents to work with their children at home and to encourage them to come into the school and be part of the educational program.

At the heart of HOME WORKS is a colorful folder, personalized with the student's name, which is sent home periodically to encourage home/school communication. The folder contains a calendar of events for the coming month, a personal progress report from each child's teacher, examples of the child's work, worksheets for the parent and child to complete together that reinforce what is being taught in the classroom, and printed materials — articles on encouraging basic skills or tips on effective parenting techniques, for example — intended to help parents help their children.

A variety of other materials encourages regular communication with parents. A student/parent/teacher agreement outlines the general goals of the program and encourages a commitment from all concerned. Each parent receives a check-off sheet for sending messages to the teacher, with such alternatives as "My child seems to be having troubles" and "I am not sure if I am doing the home activities correctly. I need more instructions."

A special magnet with the HOME WORKS logo is sent home with every child, and parents are encouraged to use it on the refrigerator to display a sample of the child's work. The program also provides a special library of high interest books, selected to provide opportunities for parent-child interaction. Each book contains a HOME WORKS library card that parents sign, indicating that they have read the book with the child. A monthly HOME WORKS parent newsletter keeps parents informed and involved. Centrally produced, the newsletter contains a blank column for teachers to personalize before duplicating and sending the newsletter home.

A parent volunteer program is an important part of HOME WORKS. "Parents are eager to participate once they are made aware that their help is needed and that training is provided," says Bailey. Another vital component of HOME WORKS, she adds, is recognition. "We give parents a lot of positive communication by telephone, Smile-Grams, special certificates of merit for both students and parents, and interaction at parent meetings."

HOME WORKS has proven highly successful at involving parents in children's learning activities and encouraging home school communications, according to Bailey. "The program was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an exemplary program," she notes proudly. "We believe that parents are the most credible source of information on their child's educational needs. If there is caring, learning will follow. HOME WORKS helps us reach out and pull parents in."

Loveland parents help LD kids succeed

The Thompson school district in Loveland, Colo., works hard at maintaining strong parent involvement in its special education programs, subscribing to the philosophy that parents are the most important resource for preparing learning disabled children to succeed in school. "We have tried a variety of different approaches," says Barbara Benjamin, special education coordinator. "Involving parents in the process is the approach that seems to work best."

The district's Parent Resource Program is intended for parents of children who have been identified as having a learning disability or a handicap and is designed to involve them in the development of an individual educational plan for each child. "It's a scary time for parents when children are singled out in this way," Benjamin says, "and we feel that by helping the parents we are helping the children."

To initiate the program, referrals of experienced parents that could offer support to other parents going through the process were sought from the teachers. Each of these referred parents was contacted individually and invited to participate in a 12-hour training session. The parents spend time expressing their concerns and discussing how they coped with the problems they experienced when their own children were going through the diagnosis and planning process. Then training is offered to improve the parents' communication skills, familiarize them with the school-based programs that are available, and teach them exactly what is involved in the process of developing an educational plan and individual goals for a learning disabled child.

The primary purpose in starting the parent resource group was to give parents of children who are experiencing learning problems contact with other parents who already have been through the process. Knowing what to expect and having sympathetic support reduces the inevitable stress on the parents, enabling them to be more supportive and helpful to their child. More important, parents are better prepared to assist in the planning and be active participants in the education of their children.

The parent resource group proved so successful, Benjamin says, that the program's staff decided to develop an informative booklet telling parents about the planning process and the different steps involved in diagnosing a learning disability and developing an educational plan. Regular meetings of the group are held to explain policies and procedures to parents and to provide them with other resources. "We've had a variety of speakers," Benjamin notes, "including teachers from the special education program, school psychologists, and outside experts."

To help everyone involved to understand the frustration and joys of working with handicapped children, the group offered a workshop for parents, special educators, and even bus drivers who transport the children. The meeting focused on what it feels like to be the parent of a handicapped child or the person responsible for providing education or service to that child. It was, notes Benjamin, a positive experience for everyone involved.

"We believe that parents play an important role in their children's education," says Benjamin, "and at times the responsibility can be overwhelming for parents of disabled children. We have tried to establish a system for supporting the parents to help them to share the responsibility."

"Involving parents in the educational process takes time," she concludes, "but it is well worth the effort."

Coalitions of municipal agencies

Many community groups are interested in the well-being of the schools and are logical support groups and participants in the involvement process, whether it is through advisory groups as discussed above or in more complex relationships where responsibility for community education programs actually is shared.

This strategy, however, cannot be implemented overnight. Setting up an interagency council and the complete system of neighborhood advisory councils has taken the Birmingham, Mich., schools about 10 years, Bryant says. "The system is based on trust, and it takes a while for the level of trust to build up. It also takes a while for people to see the benefit of community ownership. At the beginning, we had to get past the attitude of 'what's in it for me. It isn't easy to get groups as diverse as the League of Women Voters, the school board, the city government, and the YMCA all working together!

"Through the advisory council, the school system is part of a coalition of agencies that is concerned about issues like equitable school finance, racism, services for senior citizens, affordable housing, and commercial development. We're using the educational process to educate our community leadership on really important issues."

City and schools mesh in Anchorage

One place where community leadership is closely involved in community education is Anchorage, Alaska, where community education is a function of the municipal government. According to Jill Waters, community schools director, the municipality and the school district signed a joint use agreement in 1976 to encourage fuller use of school facilities. This agreement

Working with coalitions

People tend to join together in the face of a common threat or when opportunity arises. This is what coalitions are all about. A coalition is a group of organizations or individuals, often with diverse interests, formed to deal with a common issue or to achieve a common purpose. A school system can help start coalitions. Bringing groups together to focus on issues increases understanding and support. Forming a coalition, however, requires planning. Here are some of the guidelines:

- Select members who will work not out of self-interest but out of concern for the common good.
- Be sure members have the information they need to make wise decisions and encourage them to develop strategies to deal with the issues.
- Keep coalition members, and your staff, board, and community informed.
- Avoid voting; work on the basis of consensus.
- Don't insist that all groups deal with objectives in the same manner. Try to agree on general ideas and projects.
- Be willing to make compromises for the common good. Be a good negotiator.

Coalitions dealing with issues concerning education are a natural part of the school/home/community communications effort. By bringing together individuals and groups to work on common concerns, schools can turn diversity into unity that creates a consensus for education.

— From *Public Relations for Administrators*, published by the American Association of School Administrators, 1985.

became the basis for cooperation between the local government and the school system, with the municipality taking on the responsibility to do more to assist the district with projects and offer resources to principals and educators. "The request to establish a community school must come from the citizens," Waters explains, "and it is an involved process, so there has to be a strong commitment."

Individual community schools belong to the neighborhoods they serve, according to Waters. Governed by local associations made up entirely of volunteers, the programs are overseen by coordinators who are city employees. The associations work closely with the school principals whose facilities they use, both to avoid duplication of effort and to meet needs that the district does not address. A board of directors governs each neighborhood association, and a committee structure deals with each function of the community schools program. "We have a very cooperative working relationship with the school district," Waters says.

The joint effort provides many benefits to the district, Waters maintains. For example, when an after-school education program was eliminated due to budget cuts, the community schools stepped in to fill the gap. Volunteers helped to set up classes, collected revenue to pay an instructor, and ran the program. And when the need for before- and after-school care for children of working parents became evident, community schools volunteers researched the issue, assessed local needs, and organized a program to provide extended care at the district's elementary schools.

Volunteers come from all walks of life. Some, says Waters, are drawn in by having children in the school system; but the neighborhood associations include attorneys, homemakers, teachers, businesspeople, and many others. More than 8,000 volunteers contribute 54,000 hours to the community schools each year. "We make use of the expertise people have to share," says Waters. "For instance, each community school puts out a newsletter. The newsletters are printed professionally by a volunteer who runs a print shop. We have found that most people are glad to offer their time because the services are such a benefit to the community."

Teachers should be involved, too

A healthy and viable learning society has not only the community involved in the schools' agenda, but encourages involvement of the school, and particularly of the professional staff, in the community. The importance of teacher involvement has been the focus of attention for several decades. At a 1975 convention of the American Association of School Administrators,

Benefits of home visitations

The school can:

- Obtain support from parents that will reinforce the school's efforts.
- Gain insights into parent/child relationships that influence the student.
- Obtain specific information about the student that is of value in providing motivation.
- Observe situations that might foretell potential changes or account for changes that already have taken place in the student's behavior.
- Provide information and support to parent(s) regarding the student.
- Learn how the school and school personnel are perceived by the student and the parent(s) of the student.
- Observe the degree of social order or disorder in the home that influences student work habits.

then Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell suggested that the key to dramatic progress in American education is to gain a rededication to learning in the home. The person holding the key to this rededication, he said, is the teacher who has direct access to the home through the school.

Administrators and teachers should be encouraged to spend time in the community in their professional capacities. They should visit businesses and agencies that are potential educational partners or resources and meet parents and com-

The parent can:

- Meet, on what may be a more relaxed basis, and communicate in the security and comfort of the home.
- Have the opportunity to ask questions of a professional educator.
- Illustrate problems or frustrations that require direct observation.
- Ask how to help the student at home.

The student can:

- Have the opportunity to welcome school personnel into the home (and to watch how the person reacts to it).
- Show new aspects of himself or herself.
- Illustrate problems and situations that he or she may find difficult to articulate.
- Profit from the relationship that the school establishes (and maintains) with the parent(s).

munity members in nonschool settings, including the home. Phone calls to parents and attendance at community meetings also should be a part of outreach efforts.

Although the rationale for engaging in this type of involvement is strong, many administrators and teachers are reluctant to do so. Historically, administrator and teacher preparation programs have included little training in this area. Even when school personnel have gained confidence in working with community members in a school setting, they often are still hesitant to make additional outreach efforts. Time constraints are a contributing cause, but lack of training and uneasiness about the somewhat different approach required in a nonschool setting are the primary causes.

David Seeley, in *Education Through Partnership*, identifies two other constraints on teachers' communications with the home. He says a kind of natural tension exists between teachers and parents, one that is increased when the backgrounds of the children and teachers are different. The second constraint is the difference in the respective roles of the teachers and parents, with their differing views of children's needs and development.

A growing trend today is to employ professional staff as home/school/community liaisons. The role of the liaison is to promote the perception of the school as a place where living and learning converge so that what goes on in school is relevant to what goes on in the student's home and community. Liaisons can work most effectively through home visits, but home visits cause anxiety on the part of both parents and liaisons alike. Most parents have little or no experience of school personnel coming to their homes and are uncertain of what to expect. Likewise, most school personnel have little or no training or experience in making home visits and often are apprehensive about how they will be received.

No single format is appropriate for every home visitation. However, for the visit to have a successful outcome, the liaisons must go into the homes with open mind, positive attitudes, and the belief that parents have something of value to contribute.

Broadcast your results

Schools with broad support and successful community education/involvement programs know how to blow their own horn. They realize that the success of a school system's community involvement efforts is dependent on its ability to communicate with the total community. The public image of both education and the schools directly affects the community's willingness to give its support.

School districts across the country have found dozens of innovative ways to broadcast their success. For example:

- Private Initiatives in Public Education (PIPE) in Seattle, Wash., developed a book called *The Doable Dozen: A Checklist of Practical Ideas for School-Business Partnerships,* which was published by the National Community Education Association. Intended for all kinds of partners and schools, the book is filled with tried-and-tested ideas for partnering programs in 12 categories.

Strategy VII: Develop a system that expedites home/school/community communication.

- School adoptions by local media outlets in Memphis, Tenn., have resulted in good public relations, according to Barbara Russell, director of the district's Adopt-A-School program. For instance, a television station paired with an elementary school used local children in a television commercial that promoted the Adopt-A-School program. Children learned all about television communications, and the resulting advertisement captured a national award, to say nothing of the free public relations it engendered.

- The Salt Lake City, Utah, school district sends a Christmas greeting and newsletter to its SMILES volunteers. A monthly newsletter is sent to volunteer coordinators to enable them to share ideas with each other.

- In Utah, school volunteers were publicly honored by the governor and Salt Lake City's mayor with a proclamation making September 1987 "We Salute School Volunteers Month." Each school in the city displayed a 12- by 2-foot banner saying "We Salute School Volunteers!" and a host of special activities was planned to honor volunteers.

- In Pattonville, Mo., an annual community education fair highlights what is going on the school district. Fair activities include information on the district's intervention and prevention program, community services, and new staff members. The well-attended event is funded by a food-tasting party that runs concurrently. All types of ethnic foods are donated, and the proceeds pay for the fair.

- In Wauwatosa, Wis., a comprehensive community calendar is produced and distributed throughout the community by the school district. The calendar contains key school dates as well as basic information about the budget, statistics about enrollment and student achievement, and the phone numbers of the school district's offices. Each month is illustrated with photos and short feature articles about district programs, such as early childhood education, science activities, computer use, and summer learning.

- Another community relations effort in Wauwatosa is called Counselor Call-in. "We arranged for radio time," says organizer Mary Pat Pfeil, "and had all our counselors available to answer any questions the residents wanted to ask." The event was promoted heavily, Pfeil says, and had a positive effect on the community. "We found that many people called the schools to ask questions before the event, and they were more apt to call with questions and concerns afterwards. This did a lot to promote good communications with the community."

Public relations grows more complex

In the past, a public relations programs might have experienced success simply by telling the community that the schools were doing a good job. Today, especially in the light of various educational reform reports that suggest that all is not well within the schools, the public is concerned with accountability and wants accurate, detailed information. Moreover, since a declining percentage of households have school-age children, the public relations program must communicate the benefits to the total community of what the schools are doing. Obviously this is a task made easier if community education programs are being

Public relations pays off

The National School Public Relations Association recently studied 50 successful bond issue and tax levy votes in both large and small school districts to determine the factors that led to success at the polls. In all 50 cases, the districts had an ongoing public relations program in place long before they entered upon the bond or levy campaign. Just as a district in a crisis situation would never enter a court of law without a good lawyer, school districts can no longer enter the court of public opinion without a good public relations program.

developed and implemented that address the needs of more than just the school-age population.

In many communities, demographic changes have caused a diminished sense of education's importance even as media attention has brought about a heightened awareness of its problems. The transference of many social issues — from drug abuse to AIDS — to the schools' sphere of responsibility makes the public relations task even more difficult, since rarely is there community unanimity on how such issues should be handled.

Developing a public relations program

Developing a good public relations program, a means of communication among the home, the school, and the community, is crucial to the success of the learning society. As John Wherry, executive director of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) points out, public relations has become an integral and inescapable part of school management, and the core of the concept as it is practiced today is "action in the public interest." A comprehensive public relations program should have these characteristics, as delineated by Don Bagin, Donald Ferguson, and Gary Marx in *Public Relations for Administrators*:

- It is planned, systematic, and ongoing.
- It is a management function and involves issues management.
- It contains strategies developed for the system as a whole, each building, and each program.
- It contains a communications system for listening and responding to both internal and external publics.
- It is open and honest and involves personal and interpersonal communications.

Many misunderstandings between schools and the communities they serve result from a failure to communicate properly. As Bagin, Ferguson, and Marx point out, "Effective communication is the lifeblood of effective public relations." Four basic strategies will help any school system develop an effective public relations program. They are:

1. Don't overlook the local school.

2. Hire an expert.

3. Use key communicators.

4. Learn from the winners.

Don't overlook the local school

Effective schools research contains important implications for planning the communications system. Research shows that what goes on in the local school may override what goes on at the system level in terms of building confidence and improving school climate. For most of the people in a school's service area, parents and nonparents, that school represents the entire system. If their perception of its programs, facilities, and personnel is positive, they often view the entire system positively. The reverse also is true. Thus, the design of a public relations program and communications system must include a planned effort on the part of the staff of each school as well as an overall system effort.

All of the individuals connected to a school system and its schools, services, and programs have a role, however large or small, in public relations and communications. Although they may not always have as much impact as professional educators, the support personnel — bus drivers, crossing guards, cafeteria workers, secretaries, maintenance staff — influence the community's overall perception of the school system and its schools. The public relations program and communications system are more effective when the contributions of all are recognized as part of the school's public image.

Hire an expert

Because of the increasing evidence of public relations' importance, many school systems have a systemwide public relations administrative position. This administrator usually reports directly to the superintendent. Common job titles include community relations director, public information officer, and

Sample job description for director of communications

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Bachelor's and master's degrees, one of which is in journalism or communications.
2. Work experience in the media or as a public relations professional.
3. Experience with publications, film, audio tape, and video tape.
4. Alternatives to the above qualifications the board may find appropriate and acceptable.

REPORTS TO:
Superintendent.

SUPERVISES:
Communications staff.

JOB GOAL:
To direct the internal and external communications programs for the school system.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:
Administration

1. Administers districtwide functions as designated by the superintendent.
2. Develops and directs a planned, systematic and continuous program of communications for the school district.
3. Directs the district's communications program on a local, state and national basis, with major emphasis on communications within the district; communications between school and home; and communications between the district and the community.
4. Serves as a communications liaison between the press and the school system.
5. Is knowledgeable of major happenings within the district as a basis for accurate communications.
6. Arranges for press coverage at major functions.

7. Organizes and plans regular meetings of the communications advisory groups.
8. Maintains a working relationship with community leadership and community organizations.
9. Serves as an advisor to the superintendent and as a member of the superintendent's cabinet.
10. Represents the school system at designated community, state, and national functions.

Personnel

1. Works with administrators, staff members, and community volunteers in planning and developing public relations programs and strategies for both one-way and two-way communications.
2. Plans, develops, and maintains channels for communications with all staff.

Curriculum

1. Is well-informed about school programs and activities as a basis for meeting communications needs.
2. Serves as a communications consultant for various district committees, such as the school improvement process committee and curriculum committees.
3. Aids in developing communications plans for curriculum adoptions.

Staff Development

1. Works with the director of staff development in developing and leading communications workshops needed and requested by staff members.
2. Arranges for staff development opportunities for the communications staff.

Communications

1. Manages the operation of the communications department with responsibility for department personnel, budget development, materials, and equipment.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

Twelve-month year.

EVALUATION

Performance of this position will be evaluated annually in accordance with the board's policy on the evaluation of administrators.

communications director. In communities where a systemwide community education program exists, the community relations director may supervise the overall community education program.

A variety of individuals have major responsibilities in designing and carrying out the public relations program and the home/school/community communications effort. The school board provides the policies and allocates support. The attitudes of board members influence the general climate in which the public relations efforts are promoted.

The superintendent and building principals are key figures. They are the ones who plan for coordination of efforts, authorize the required support, and actively encourage the staff, especially central office administrators and teachers, to increase their external communications efforts. They also are responsible for ensuring that the public relations and communications efforts are understood by, and acceptable to, all the other personnel involved.

At the building level, teachers and guidance counselors play a major role in public relations and communications with parents through their daily contact with students. Student descriptions of school and classroom activities, notes sent home, telephone calls to parents, and home visitations significantly influence perceptions.

Use key communicators

Key communicators, already singled out as important to planning and assessment activities, also can be invaluable in ensuring communication since they are a means of formally tapping and using the community grapevine. Key communicators can be almost anyone in the community and can be a group of a few people or a hundred, but those selected should represent a cross section of the community and have two traits in common:

- They should be people who are respected and listened to in their circle of contacts, regardless of the size of the circle.

- They also must be supportive of the school and concerned about its successful operation.

The key communicators selected should be kept well-informed about the school. Their job is two-fold: to broadcast accurate and supportive information to other members of the community and to be listening posts in the community, alerting school administration about rumors and community concerns.

More than 1,100 people in Eugene, Ore., serve the school district as key communicators, according to Gay Campbell, special assistant for community relations. "What we're doing is making use of the grapevine, using people who are most influential in the community," says Campbell. "We need to know how people in the community perceive things. The key communicator program enables us to find out what the concerns are."

Key communicators receive a monthly newsletter from the district that emphasizes decisions facing the district and how the community can be involved in the decision-making process. "We give them the straight story on anything controversial," says Campbell, "and we encourage them to call if there are rumors in the community regarding the school district."

Key communicators come from all segments of the community, according to Campbell. "We invite people from the PTAs, heads of local organizations, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, individuals who have served on local task forces, and people who have complained to the school district — as well as beauticians, clergy, media people, and others who might represent the thinking of the community."

Key communicators help guide the district in making decisions and help promote good community relations. "For example," explains Campbell, "if two or three people call in with a complaint or concern about something going on in a particular school, we would quickly call a dozen or so key communicators from that school to see whether they know of others who share the same concern. Their input may make it apparent that the problem is not a big concern to many other people, or it may alert us to a situation that needs to be addressed publicly."

Once each month, the superintendent hosts a luncheon for community leaders from various fields. Different people are invited each month, and they are asked to bring their concerns and come prepared to ask questions. These luncheons allow the superintendent to keep his finger on the pulse of the community.

"We run an open district," asserts Campbell. "Our local media people know we have nothing to hide from them; in fact, we send them our internal newsletter as well as our key

Guidelines for key communicators

The National School Public Relations Association is a strong advocate for the use of key communicators and gives the following advice for establishing and using a key communicators program:

- Select men and women, parents and non-parents — those reflecting a cross section of your community — and personally call each individual and invite him or her to become a key communicator.
- Invite all communicators to a meeting, stressing that there will not be additional meetings. At this meeting, explain the concept of the program and the need for two-way communication.
- Send "care" envelopes on a regular basis, containing the school paper, pertinent staff bulletins, the school calendar, etc.
- Keep a supply of envelopes addressed to your key communicators and set up a telephone chain so that if an incident occurs at school, they can receive a phone call or simple letter of explanation before the story reaches the media or is exaggerated by the rumor mill.
- At the end of the year, invite the key communicators to a "thank you" get together; you may include a token of appreciation, such as a pass to a school game or special event.

communicator newsletter. The information we receive from this vital program is invaluable, both for helping us to assess community needs and to enable the community to be involved in the education process."

Learn from the winners

The National School Public Relations Association annually conducts a Gold Medallion Award competition to recognize outstanding educational public relations programs, focusing on total programs, finance campaigns, community relations, boundary backlash, crisis communications, and PR programs involving students. NSPRA is the only group that recognizes school public relations on a national basis. The association's publication, *Learn from the Winners . . . School PR Programs that Work*, reviews selected award-winning school systems.

Among the districts that have been singled out is Salem, Ore., District 24J, whose public relations program focuses on visitations to improve the level of understanding in a community where 72 percent of the households have no children in school.

These visitations, called "See for Yourself" tours, allow interested community members to see the schools in action. Tour participants visit classrooms; talk with the principal, staff, and students; and have their questions answered about the kind of education students are receiving. On an official "See for Yourself" tour, guests normally receive an overview of the school system from the superintendent, watch the district's slide/tape show, and then tour three schools (secondary, middle, and elementary). The tour concludes with lunch with the superintendent in one of the school cafeterias and time for questions and answers.

Every effort is extended to make the "See for Yourself" tour a special event for participants. Included in the list of personal touches are suggestions to:

- Welcome each guest individually.
- Provide each guest with a name tag and information packet with data sheets on the schools, student/parent handbook, activity calendars, and involvement possibilities.
- Provide time for orientation, questions and answers, and refreshments.

- Show off good instruction and strong basic skills in the classrooms.

- Record the names and addresses of guests for future use (such as thank you's, volunteer recruiting, or follow-up mailings).

The Pattonville, Mo., schools also have received an NSPRA Gold Medallion Award. The award, presented to Pattonsville for its entry in the internal staff communications category, cited the district for the way it involves staff through orientation opportunities, participation in district workshops and meetings, input in decision making, publications, and appreciation and recognition.

The district also was recognized by NSPRA with three Golden Achievement awards. They were presented for "Pattonville on Parade," the district's salute to the community's performing arts talent; the staff orientation program, which provides opportunities for all staff to become informed about what is new in the district; and for the 1984-85 district calendar.

A look at the winners

A review of the multifaceted programs chosen by NSPRA as Gold Medallion Award winners shows:

- **The components of a total public relations program include analyzing, planning, communicating, and evaluating.**

- **The successful public relations program exists with the full and united support of both the superintendent and the board of education.**

- **The entire community — school board, administration, faculty, parents, students, and citizens — recognizes its partnership in the educational process.**

Use all available resources

John Wherry, executive director of NSPRA, cautions that effective public relations and communications require "a battery of skills and knowledge — careful planning, adequate resources, and total commitment."

The following organizations and associations provide publications, audiovisual materials, and services to help your district develop an integrated public relations and communications program in tune with your community education activities.

American Association of School Administrators
1801 N. Moore St.
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 528-0700

Communication Briefings
140 S. Broadway
Pitman, NJ 08012
(609) 589-3503

Educational Communication Center
Box 657
Camp Hill, PA 17011
(717) 761-6620

The Home and School Institute
c/o Trinity College
Washington, DC 20017
(202) 362-9066

Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 353-3309

Continued next page

Macomb Intermediate School District
Communication Services
44001 Garfield Road
Mt. Clemens, MI 48044
(313) 268-3450

National Association of Elementary School Principals
1615 Duke St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 864-3345

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-0200

National Committee for Citizens in Education
410 Wilde Lake Village Center
Columbia, MD 21044
(301) 596-5300

National Community Education Association
119 North Payne St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 683-6232

National School Boards Association
1680 Duke St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-6722

National School Public Relations Association
1501 Lee Highway
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 528-5840

National School Volunteer Program, Inc.
701 N. Fairfax St., Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 836-4880

Appendix

Sample job description for director of community education

This position will be directly accountable to the board of education and to the superintendent. The director of community education will be responsible for the overall development, organization, operation, coordination, and evaluation of the defined community education program geared toward the interests and needs of the children, youth, and adults living within the service area. The director will have primary responsibility for selecting, training, supervising, and evaluating all paid and nonpaid staff members working within the community education program. To accomplish these broad duties, the director will perform the following functions:

1. Establish and assist the activities of the community education advisory council.

2. Represent the school system in all matters related to the overall conduct of the community education program.

3. Maintain a calendar of community school events and publicize these in every feasible way.

4. Keep the board and superintendent informed of all major events.

5. Serve as the communications link between the school system and those other public and private organizations that provide educational, recreational, and social services for the residents of those areas served by designated community schools.

6. Advance the understanding of community education among principals, custodial staff, teachers, and classified employees of the system.

7. Assist in the creation of harmonious working relationships among principals, custodial staff, teachers, and classified employees of the system and the paid and nonpaid community education staff members.

8. Enforce the rules and regulations of the school system during the times the community education program is being conducted.

9. Seek and develop additional funding sources to supplement and expand the community education program.

10. Develop and operate a balanced, year-round program that includes a responsible mixture of activities and involvement for children, youth, and adults.

11. Establish rapport with community leaders in the designated attendance area.

12. Become familiar with the social and economic structure of the community, and apply this knowledge to program development.

13. Assist the instructional staff in the development and operation of programs that can enrich the regular curriculum.

14. Conduct, with the concurrence of the community council, periodic assessments of community needs and interests.

15. Assist in program evaluations for the purpose of upgrading existing programs and implementing new ideas.

16. Be on the premises when community education activities are in progress, unless some other authorized person has been delegated that responsibility.

17. Perform other related duties and responsibilities as requested by the board or the superintendent.

Sample school board resolution in support of community education

WHEREAS, there is a rising public insistence that all levels of government become more responsive to citizen needs and desires; and

WHEREAS, a limited amount of tax monies and other human and physical resources is available to meet public demands for facilities, programs, and services; and

WHEREAS, full utilization of existing public facilities, programs, and services is a desirable community goal; and

WHEREAS, the complexity of community problems points to an increasing need for all governmental units and related public service organizations to mobilize their respective resources for the common purpose of improving the quality of community life; and

WHEREAS, state statutes and local regulations recognize and authorize local governments, including school systems, to make formal agreements for joint planning and performance of functions; and

WHEREAS, the local communities have facilities, equipment, and staff organized for the purpose of providing educational opportunities for children and youth, and some communities have certain other educational, recreational, cultural, and service programs for all patrons; and

WHEREAS, some communities provide facilities, staff, and certain recreational and service programs for the citizens within their geographic boundaries; and

WHEREAS, other related public and private community organizations provide programs and services for community betterment; and

WHEREAS, no single, cohesive strategy for the development and utilization of all these relevant community resources has yet been established; and

WHEREAS, great potential social and economic benefits can be derived from further cooperation in facility and program development for the benefit of all citizens through comprehensive community education programs at the local level;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the school board endorses the concept of community education as an educational process that serves all age groups in the community and employs the total resources of the community to develop programs and services needed or desired by students, teachers, and residents.

FURTHER, the board supports and encourages the development of community schools throughout the school district. It supports and encourages the development of comprehensive educational/social/recreational programs at each community school, resulting from joint community school planning. To this end, the board enlists the active involvement of other units of local governments.

FURTHER, the board specifically supports the following basic objectives:

- The development of an effective organization for community school involvement.
- The development of a working relationship with private and public agencies.
- The effective utilization of school facilities for all age groups.
- The promotion of volunteer leadership in all phases of the program.
- The use of the total community, wherever appropriate, as a resource for the development of curriculum.

FURTHER, the board shall provide financial support for the development of community schools.

Needs-assessment questions

General questions

1. What is the organizational structure (i.e., elementary, secondary, combined) of the school system?
2. What are the demographics of the population in the service area?
3. What diverse educational needs exist among the population in the service area?
4. Does your system have procedures for addressing individualized educational needs in the development of curriculum and the selection of instructional materials?
5. What programs and services does the school system have to meet specialized educational needs?
6. Do the personnel responsible for specialized instruction and the other instructional staff meet regularly and plan together?
7. What are the fiscal resources (federal, state, local) available for educational programs?
8. Have educational programs changed recently? If so, how?

Strategy I. **Encourage and increase the use of community resources and volunteers to augment the educational curricula in kindergarten through 12th grade.**

9. Does your school system have organized volunteer programs? Who has administrative responsibility for these programs?
10. Does your system have established procedures for the selection, training, supervision, and recognition of volunteers?

11. Do diverse population groups in the community have opportunities to share their linguistic and cultural resources with the total community?

12. How are community settings used to augment instructional programs?

Strategy II: Develop educational partnerships between the school system and public and private service providers, business and industry, and civic and social service agencies.

13. Does the school system have procedures for cooperating with other agencies to provide services and share facilities?

14. Describe any cooperative relationships and programs with businesses and other agencies.

15. Are community resources from nonprofit, civic, and social organizations actively sought, cataloged, and used?

16. Do business, nonprofit, civic, and social organizations meet with school representatives on a regular basis to plan cooperative programs and services?

Strategy III: Use public educational facilities as community service centers for meeting the educational, social, health, cultural, and recreational needs of people of all ages and from all sectors of the community.

17. What are the school system's policies for the extended use of school facilities? Are the facilities available and used by the public during after-school hours and weekends and during the summer months?

18. Is data available on the extent of extended use?

19. What procedures, requirements, and costs are associated with extended use of school facilities?

20. Do you have a complete inventory of school facilities, outdoor spaces, and specialized facilities and equipment that are available for public use?

21. Do you have any cooperative forms of facility use in which the school and one or more agencies jointly provide services to the community in a shared setting?

22. Are there any contractual arrangements between the school system and other agencies regarding facility use?

23. Do you have any facilities of which the school is a part that are designed to provide a variety of services under one roof to a large number of people, i.e., a human resource center?

24. What are the policies and practices for the use of vacant and unused school buildings?

25. What are the staffing patterns or procedures for building supervision regarding extended facility use?

26. Are usage fees charged? What are they? Who pays them? How are rates determined?

Strategy IV: Encourage the development of an environment that fosters lifelong learning.

27. Does your school system have an organized continuing education and recreation program available to all community residents?

28. What is the administrative structure for offering specialized educational services (i.e., enrichment opportunities, vocational education, tutorial programs, learning disabilities programs, etc.), adult education, community education, and recreation?

29. Are community residents of various ages, income groups, interests, and family structures involved in assessing needs and establishing program priorities in your schools?

30. Do cooperative relationships exist between the school and colleges/universities, youth and community agencies, libraries, and other public entities in offering learning opportunities for all community residents?

Strategy V: Establish community involvement processes in educational planning and decision making.

31. Does your system assess the needs of the community on a regular basis? What processes (advisory committees, surveys, group meetings, etc.) are used?

32. Are community residents involved in policy development? In program development? In the establishment of procedures? In program evaluation?

33. How are decisions made? Who makes them? What is the role of each of the following: the board, administration, instructional staff, community members, students, and other agencies?

34. Does your system have established advisory groups? If so, list them.

35. What roles do the advisory groups have? Do they conduct needs assessments, review proposals, make decisions, make recommendations, other?

36. What access do advisory groups have to staff, information, and resources? How often do they meet?

Strategy VI: Provide a responsive, community-based support system for collective action among all educational and community agencies to address both current quality-of-life issues of all citizens and specialized needs.

37. Does your school system encourage cooperative action in addressing complex social, health, educational, and economic issues (i.e., drug and substance abuse, housing, literacy, public safety and crime prevention, at-risk youth,

violence and vandalism, teen pregnancy, racial and minority concerns)? If so, describe the policy and kinds of cooperative efforts.

38. Does your community have an interagency group that meets regularly to assess community issues and concerns? If so, describe the group and how it functions.

39. Have community-based programs and actions been implemented as a result of shifts in community demographics or strategic planning efforts? If so, describe the programs and actions.

40. Do individual schools participate in community-based programs that address specialized needs? If so, describe the programs.

Strategy VII: Develop a system that expedites home/school/ community communications.

41. How do your system and individual schools communicate with community members?

42. What means do your system and individual schools use to communicate with households in your community (i.e., newsletters, parent/teacher conferences, home visitations, other)?

43. What external communications media are available for use by your school system (i.e., newspaper, radio, television, other)?

44. How are you organized to carry out a program of public information and regular communications among home, school, and community?

45. Do you have an established procedure that encourages ongoing communications among home, school, and community? If so, describe it.

Adapted from *Capacity Building Alternatives: Training and Development Manual*, 1985.

Sample policy statements

1. Advisory committees to the board of education

School board members are elected to represent the interests of the public and students in the management of the system's schools. One major responsibility is to keep in touch with public opinion and provide for effective two-way communication.

Because the board wishes to encourage the widespread participation of all interested groups, it advocates the formation of advisory committees composed of local citizens. Citizen advisory groups will be broadly representative to ensure that their recommendations accurately reflect community interests.

Any committees authorized will be established by the board, serve the board in an advisory capacity, and serve at the pleasure of the board. The committees will function under the direction of the superintendent. The board will have the sole power to dissolve any of its advisory committees and reserves the right to exercise this power at any time during the life of any committee.

The citizen advisory committees will keep the board informed of all meetings and actions. The board will receive written reports, including minority reports when made, and will respond promptly in writing to any suggestions or recommendations.

All advice provided by citizen committees will be given careful consideration. In the evaluation of citizen committees' advice, the first concern will be for the educational program as it affects pupils.

The board possesses certain legal powers and prerogatives that cannot be delegated or surrendered to others. Therefore, the board's final decision may depart from the committees' advice when in the judgment of the staff and the board such advice is not consistent with goals adopted by the board or within the reach of available financial resources.

2. System-level advisory committees

The following policies will govern the appointment and functioning of the system's advisory committees:

1. Advisory committees may be created for special purposes. The committees may assist in identifying needs, providing input for setting district policies, conducting studies and making recommendations regarding specific problems confronting the schools, serving as communication links between the community and policy makers, and any other tasks deemed appropriate.
2. If an advisory committee is required by state or federal law, its composition and appointment will meet all the guidelines established for that particular type of committee.
3. The composition of other advisory committees will be broadly representative of the community and will take into consideration the specific tasks assigned to the committees; members of the professional staff may be appointed to the committees as members or consultants, if desirable.
4. Each committee will be clearly instructed as to:
   - a. The length of time each member is to serve.
   - b. The service the committee is to render, and the extent and limitations of its responsibilities.
   - c. The resources that will be provided.
   - d. The approximate date(s) on which it is to report.
   - e. Board policies governing citizen committees and the relationship of these committees to the board as a whole, individual board members, the superintendent, and other members of the professional staff.
   - f. The responsibilities and limitations on the release of information to the press.
5. Recommendations of citizen committees shall be based on research and fact. Their recommendations will be channeled through the staff member designated as the committee coordinator to the appropriate official destination.
6. The board and the office of the superintendent will periodically reiterate through the public media (directly and indirectly) the functions of the advisory committees and the importance of the advisory committees' activities to the board and the superintendent in the decision- and policy-making processes.

3. Building-level advisory committees

The board recommends the establishment of a principal's advisory committee for each individual school. The committee's purpose will be to provide an organized structure through which interested parents and other citizens of each school attendance area can communicate with the professional staff of that school about educational and student-related issues and can work with them systematically to improve the total school environment.

Each advisory committee will:

1. Work to encourage an effective and open system of communications between the school and the citizens it serves.
2. Work with the principal and school staff to interpret and inform other individual citizens and citizen groups about the purposes, plans, and programs of the school and the school system.
3. Work with other individual parents, citizens, and citizen groups to interpret and communicate to the staff the ideas, beliefs, and aspirations of the citizens for the educational development of pupils in the school.
4. Assist the school staff in the determination and interpretation of the reactions of area citizens to school programs.
5. Assist the school in the identification of educational needs not being met by the current program.
6. Serve as representatives of the citizens of the area, reacting to proposals for changing existing programs and materials and/or adding new ones.

The board suggests the following guidelines for the advisory committee at an individual school:

1. The advisory committee for each school should establish a method by which any citizen or group of citizens in the school area may present ideas and issues to it. However, the group should not interfere with regular parent/teacher/principal communication.
2. The advisory committee should address those issues that represent real and appropriate educational concerns of the citizens about the school; however, it should refer matters of concern regarding individual pupils, parents, and teachers to the usual official school channels.

3. The advisory committee should consult with the school principal for advice regarding the general concerns it identifies. The principal should determine which are to be dealt with by the school and which referred to the central staff or board.
4. The advisory committee should establish communications channels with individual citizens and groups of citizens in the school area to provide a valid area reaction to ideas, plans, and programs submitted by the school authorities or board.
5. Due consideration should be given to matters presented by advisory committees by the principal and school staff, and the committee should receive an indication of how these matters were handled.

4. School volunteers

The board believes that volunteers enhance the educational process not only for students, but also for the total community. The use of volunteers provides additional support personnel in the classroom, promotes community/school cooperation to enhance the learning process, increases community support, and provides for individuals who have expertise in various areas to be used as resource people. Volunteers provide significant services by supplementing the work of paid professional and paraprofessional staff, but are not substitutes for paid staff.

The use of volunteers is encouraged and promoted through the central office and the local school. Local school volunteers will be screened at the local school level and must be acceptable to the administrators involved. The assignment of volunteers will be done by the local school's volunteer coordinator or the principal's designee. Assignment of a classroom volunteer must be acceptable to the teacher.

Authority of school personnel. The authority to administer and supervise the activities of school volunteers when they are engaged in a school or school-related program, and when the activities fall directly within the purview of a particular employee of the board, will reside with the regularly employed professional or technical staff employee. Any conflict, dispute, or misunderstanding regarding the proper role, function, or activities of any person engaged in a voluntary service to the school will be referred for resolution and decision to the principal or volunteer coordinator of the local school in which the volunteer is serving if it cannot be resolved on a lower level. If a volunteer is serving some other facility or school-related program, then any conflict will be referred to the immediate head or administrator of the facility or program in question, or to his or her authorized designee.

Volunteer qualifications. A person's educational attainment is not a qualification. Persons willing to serve as school volunteers should possess the following qualifications:

- Cooperation, dependability, and positive thinking.
- Compatibility with children and their needs.
- Confidentiality.
- Flexibility, friendliness, and patience.
- A sense of humor.
- Responsible citizenship qualities.

5. Public relations

The board of education recognizes that schools are an integral part of the community and cannot be separated from it. It is aware that schools belong to the people who created them by taxation and consent. The board also believes that schools will be only as strong or as successful as the citizens and staff who support them, and that this support must be based on the knowledge of, understanding about, and participation in the aims and efforts of the public schools.

The board recognizes that intelligent, informed support of schools is possible only when the public has full knowledge of, understanding about, and participation in the efforts, goals, problems, and programs of the school system. It is aware of its responsibility to provide the public with information and opportunities leading to participation, directly or indirectly, in the establishment of programs and policies in the public interest.

Therefore, the board affirms that the policy and goals of the school system are to:

1. Ensure that the publics within the school system have full access to information concerning programs, policies, and administrative regulations.
2. Solicit the advice and counsel of staff, students, parents, and others on basic issues through appropriate channels of feedback and advisory committees.

3. Determine the public's reaction to the policies and programs anticipated or now carried out in the system.
4. Create and maintain an atmosphere that welcomes public involvement in school system affairs.
5. Recognize and encourage the development of attitudes that the schools belong to the community and cannot be separated from it.
6. Create and maintain an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect for children and adults residing, studying, or employed in the school system.
7. Develop, implement, and maintain an organized, ongoing program of effective communications, both internally with staff and externally within the community-at-large.
8. Cooperate in every reasonable way with the news media (press, radio, and television) as primary purveyors of public information, recognizing their right to all the facts and their responsibility to publish these facts in full.
9. Establish and maintain beneficial and cooperative relations with other branches of local, county, state, and federal government and agencies and organizations interested in and related to education.
10. Charge the administrative, instructional, and operational staffs of the system as well as the board with the duty to carry out and support this policy as an integral part of regular activities and responsibilities.

Resource school districts

The following individuals were interviewed for this book because of their involvement with effective home/school/community involvement programs. You may wish to contact one of more of them for specific information or advice about developing and implementing similar programs in your school or district.

Chapter 1: Schools using community resources

Carol W. Kinsley,
Director of Public Relations
Springfield Public Schools
195 State St.
Springfield, MA 01103
(413) 787-7080

Daphne Williams, Coordinator
of Volunteer Services
Salt Lake City Public School
District
444 East First South St.
Salt Lake City, UT 84111
(801) 322-1471

Barbara Russell, Director
Adopt-A-School Program
Memphis Public Schools
2597 Avery St.
Memphis, TN 38112
(901) 454-5622

Cynthia Shelton, Executive
Director
Private Initiatives in Education
(PIPE)
1200 One Union Square
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 461-7244

Chapter 2: Community use of school facilities

Kevin Koester, Director of
Community Education
Ankeny School District
306 S.W. School St.
Ankeny, IA 50021
(515) 964-8556

Marilyn Kerns, Community
Education Center Director
College of St. Thomas
Box 4004
St. Paul, MN 55102
(612) 647-5352

Harry Allen
Brockton High School
37 Snell St.
Brockton, MA 02401
(617) 580-7456

Vincent Vento, Asst. Supt.
Community Education
Rockwood School District
111 East North St.
Eureka, Mo. 63025
(314) 587-2531

Jim Klassen, Director,
Community Education
Roseville Area Schools
1251 West County Road B-2
Roseville, MN 55113
(612) 633-8150

Cecilia Jenkins, Community
Education Director
Yelm Public Schools
P.O. Box 476
Yelm, WA 98597
(206) 458-5731

Chapter 3: Start at the top

Kevin Koester, Director of
Community Education
Ankeny School District
306 S.W. School Street
Ankeny, IA 50021
(515) 964-8556

Skip Liebertz, Exec. Asst. to
the Superintendent
Salem-Keizer Schools
P.O. Box 12024
Salem, OR 97309
(503) 399-3038

Bob Guttmann, Director of
Community Relations
Pattonville School District
115 Harding Ave.
Maryland Heights, MO 63043
(314) 298-4418

Shirley Bryant, Director of
Community Relations
Birmingham Public Schools
550 West Merrill St.
Birmingham, MI 48012
(313) 644-9300

Chapter 4: Get everyone involved

Jill Waters, Director,
Community Schools
Municipality of Anchorage
Pouch 6-650
Anchorage, AK 99502
(907) 343-4366

Shirley Bryant, Director of
Community Relations
Birmingham Public Schools
550 West Merrill St.
Birmingham, MI 48012
(313) 644-9300

Barbara Benjamin
Pupil Personnel Services
Division of Special Education
Thompson School District
Loveland, CO 80537
(303) 669-3940

Carl Holmstrom
Superintendent of Schools
St. Louis Park Public Schools
6425 W. 33rd St.
St. Louis Park, MN 55426
(612) 925-4300

Harry Allen
Brockton High School
37 Snell St.
Brockton, MA 02401
(617) 580-7456

Pam Bailey
School-Community Relations
Coordinator
Mercer County Schools
Princeton, WV 24740
(304) 487-1551

Chapter 5: Broadcast your success

Bob Guttmann, Director of
Community Relations
Pattonville School District
115 Harding Avenue
Maryland Heights, MO 63043
(314) 298-4418

Gay Campbell, Special Asst.
for Community Relations
Eugene Public Schools
200 N. Monroe St.
Eugene, OR 97402
(503) 687-3123

Barbara Russell, Director
Adopt-A-School Program
Memphis Public Schools
2597 Avery Street
Memphis, TN 38112
(901) 454-5622

Daphne Williams, Coordinator
of Volunteer Services
Salt Lake City Public School
District
444 E. First South St.
Salt Lake City, UT 84111
(801) 322-1471

Cynthia Shelton,
Executive Director
Private Initiatives in Education
(PIPE)
1200 One Union Square
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 461-7244

Mary Pat Pfeil
Wauwatosa School District
12121 W. North Ave.
Wauwatosa, WI 53226
(414) 295-4495

Shirley Cupery, Secretary
National Congress of Parents and Teachers
700 N. Rush St.
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 787-0977

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Creating & Managing a Corporate School Volunteer Program. National School Volunteer Program, Inc., 701 N. Fairfax St., Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314. Intended for program directors and organized in a workbook format that proceeds step-by-step through conceiving, developing, and managing a plan for using corporate volunteers in a school/business partnership.

Partners for the '80s: Business and Education. National School Volunteer Program, Inc., 701 N. Fairfax St., Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314. Profiles 24 models of school/business partnerships, including basic facts (location, sponsors, budget, staffing), objectives, structure, and actual operation.

Business and Education: Partnership for the Future. United States Chamber of Commerce, 1615 H St., N.W., Washington, DC 20062. A guide book for creating partnerships from the private sector's point of view.

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55 successful partnerships to address youth unemployment problems; includes programs for curriculum revitalization, teacher internships in business, work study, and career exploration.

School Partnerships Handbook: How to Set Up and Administer Programs with Business, Government, and Your Community. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. This is a "how-to" resource that covers the steps in the process of forming, managing, and extending primarily business/education partnerships and includes many sample forms from nearly 200 partnership programs now operating in schools across the country.

The Doable Dozen. National Community Education Association, 119 N. Payne St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Leading partnership coordinators from around the nation share their most unusual and most successful partnership activities, all organized around 12 curriculum goals.

Pro Education. Pro Education Publication, P.O. Box 41570, St. Petersburg, FL 33743. This is a quarterly publication, designed as a resource tool and national sharing media. It presents ongoing dialogue between the private and public sectors on what is being done, who is doing it, and what remains to be done in the partnership realm.

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A second draft prompted Skip Liebertz of the Salem-Keizer schools in Salem, Ore., to generate a list of school districts where the idea of home/school/community involvement has long been a reality. People in those districts (who are listed in the appendix) were interviewed by Angela Martin, associate editor of the Business Service Network, who together with Network Senior Editor Debbie Demmon-Berger and Manager T. Susan Hill edited these school district stories into the original manuscript.

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